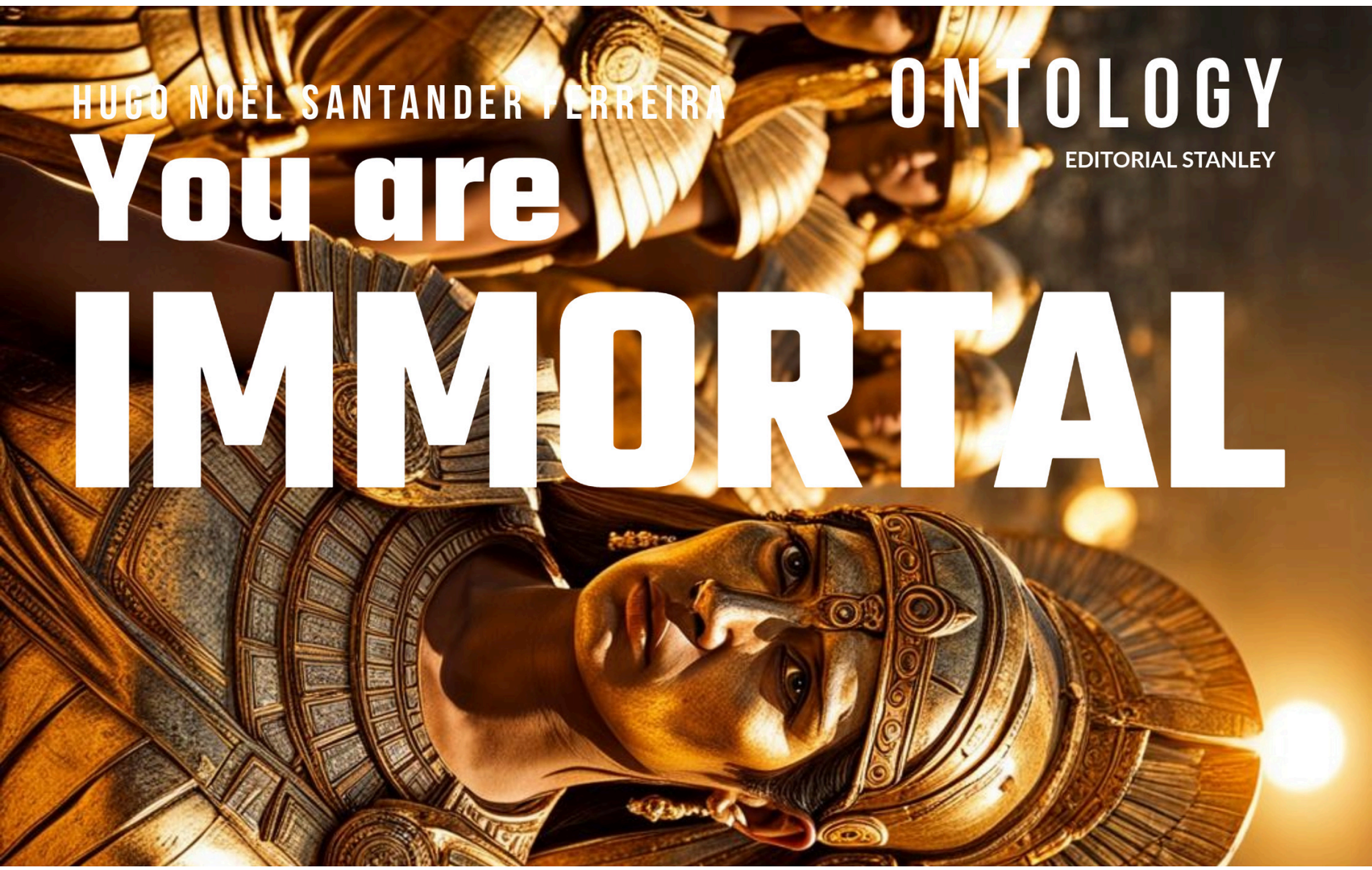
HUGO NOËL SANTANDER FERREIRA
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You are
IMMORTAL

Hugo Noël Santander Ferreira

You are IMMORTAL

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Thank my Lord
for making me weak
crazy
childish
Thanks for these prisons
that free me

Raúl Gómez Jattín

Author's Preface

… and in solitude the guide

Sor Juan de la Cruz

At the age of fourteen, after reading a fragment of Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologica, I set out to refute numerous materialist teachers who preferred nihilism over exploring the meaning of life, the world, and death.

Thirty years after I found myself cloistered in a solitary tower in Chennai, India. It was then that, after traversing continents, philosophies, professions, arts, and languages, I concluded that the mysteries of the universe were unfathomable. Ancient questions like "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?" and "Why do we exist?" would be abandoned in my quest after twenty-seven years of study.

The next day, as I walked in my room, facing an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I experienced an invisible force that touched my forehead, the region of the third eye according to ancient Indian writings. I felt intense pain and anguish in my chest, followed by profound joy and sublime love.

This phenomenon repeated for almost two hours, during which I intuited, through abductive reasoning, the architecture of our immortality and the universe. In terms of pragmatic philosophy, I received the knowledge I had long sought, in an epiphany akin to those described by William James in his work "The Varieties of Religious Experience."

> "One day in oration, on the steps of the choir of the Dominican church, he saw in a distinct manner the plan of divine wisdom in the creation of the world. On another occasion, during a procession, his spirit was ravished in God, and it was given him to contemplate, in a form and images fitted to the weak understanding of a dweller on the earth, the deep mystery of the holy Trinity. This last vision flooded his heart with such sweetness, that the mere memory, of it in after times made him shed abundant tears."

My greatest gratitude is to the Virgin Mary, who, as I comment in my introduction to 'Hymns to Jesus,' granted me the gift of knowing divine inspiration, as she had once bestowed upon so many illustrious scribes who prayed for her intercession:

> "Fichter is convinced that Suarez's academic blossoming was due to a supernatural intervention brought about through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God. Likewise, De Scoraille considers the possibility of divine intervention, citing as examples of such occurrences the legends of Albertus Magnus and Duns Scotus, who were said to have received similar prodigious intellectual gifts after seeking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin[1]."

[1] Suárez, Francisco (1999). *A Companion to Francisco Suarez*. Edited by Victor Salas and Robert Fastiggi, 2.

Many of the intuitions obtained at that time have been translated into this book, accompanied by writings I have been publishing since 2001 in specialized journals in Europe and America. 'The Definition of God,' which was already a central theme in my novel 'New Afternoons in Manhattan,' was written at the request of philosopher Martin Cohen for the 'Foundations of Ethics and Philosophy' encyclopaedia published by Hodder Education in 2005.

This book is complemented by the Auto de Fe 'The Symposium of Arcadia,' a dialogue in the gardens of eternity among 40 writers, saints, and protagonists of humanity. 'What would be the contribution of this text to philosophy?' asked me Martin Cohen after receiving a draft of Arcadia.

My main thesis is that metaphysics, like poetry and the novel, is not an exact science, but the philosophical specialization that merges imagination, intuition, and hunch in the formulation of hypotheses, that is, abductive judgments. Renouncing the claims of universality and uniqueness typical of exact sciences, Metaphysics is established as the most plausible conjecture about the soul, God, and the universe. But far from reformulating metaphysics, what I demonstrate is that it has always been there, before our eyes, segregated by an academy that insists on applying the established criterion of mathematics to social sciences that tremble due to changing ideologies or discourses for new generations; neither history, nor economics, nor sociology, nor politics manage to establish axioms, but neither do psychology, nor even medicine and physics. And although Karl Popper's concept of falsifiability has been accepted to solve this impasse, both theology and poetry and theatre are still viewed with suspicion by the 21st-century university academia, not to mention metaphysics, which has been banished along with religion not only from knowledge but from Western civilization with the postulates of the UN 2030 agenda.

I also analyse politics not from history, as is customary today, but from theology, just as Francisco Suarez did in the 16th century; the absence of God has created a void in the secular world that has been quickly seized upon by new religions or 'isms,' be it communism, National Socialism, Islamism, or socialism. Adapting Asimov’s three laws of robotics to all creeds, politic as well as religious, I have set up a frame for the peaceful coexistence of all believes, including atheism and the radical family of “isms”.

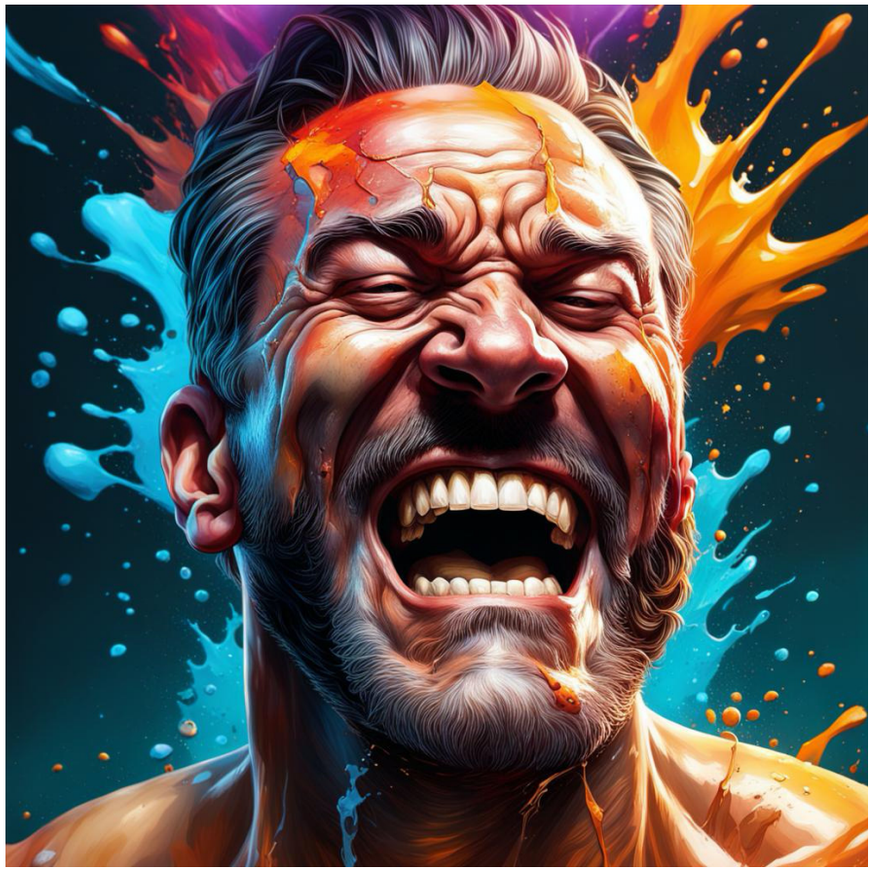
Many of the intuitions obtained at that moment have been translated into this book, accompanied by writings I have been publishing since 2001 in specialized journals in Europe and America. "The Definition of God," which was already a central theme in my novel "New Manhattan Soirées," was written at the request of the philosopher Martin Cohen for the "Foundations of Ethics and Philosophy" encyclopaedia, published by Hodder Education in 2005.

The writings contained in this book, far from being exceptional revelations, are part of the philosophical tradition of both the East and the West. Readers will find references to great philosophers as well as religious writings from Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and other traditions. The validity of these writings is supported by wisdom tested by hundreds of generations no less sceptical than our own, and, like all certainty, ultimately depends on our personal convictions.

From Van Gogh I learned that we can only let our works speak for us. Persecuted for my candour, despised for my beliefs and vindicated by what sceptics call the goddess of Fortune, and which I as a Catholic call God, I deliver to you these pages forged in my representation of the truth.

Hugo Noël Santander Ferreira

Bucaramanga, December 3, 2023



The Laughter, an Extraordinary Quality

The disdain that laughter has inspired in philosophers since ancient times is addressed by Umberto Eco in the realm of fiction in his novel "The Name of the Rose." When Guillermo de Baskerville, the hero of the novel, discovers donkeys preaching in the illustrations of a murdered monk's Bible, Jorge de Burgos' comment echoes a reactionary definition of laughter:

"—Oh, yes!" the old man mocked, but without smiling, "every image is good to stimulate virtue, so that the masterpiece of creation, turned upside down, becomes an object of laughter[2]."

The character resembles the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, a resource Eco uses to mislead his readers; Borges refuted Freud and Bergson's definitions of the comic and highlighted Schopenhauer's, who prescribed that laughter was the product of the intrusion of a category foreign to the understanding category in which the receiver is oriented. Such a conception coincides with what the English adjective "funny" offers, which primarily means "amusing" and secondarily "strange." Saying something is funny in English indicates that it is also strange.

Let's illustrate this with a joke:

A psychology book enters a bar and tells the bartender: 'I need a drink! I've been arguing about Freud and Bergson's theories on laughter, and I'm completely confused.' The bartender responds: 'That's funny! But don't worry, here we're all a little strange.

Eco, who, like Borges, was also an avid reader, applies his concept and exceeds the expectations of those who haven't read his novel, making one of his most venerated writers the most unsuspected in his detective story. His work also vindicates Aristotle, who, unlike Plato, did not censor poets, and confirms the medieval legend of the existence of the treatise on laughter:

"Venancio replied that as far as he knew, Aristotle had said that laughter was something good and suitable for conveying truth, and then Jorge asked him challengingly if he had read that book by Aristotle, and Venancio said that no one could have read it yet because it had never been found and perhaps it was lost[3]."

This text has recently been "recovered" in the "Tractatus Coislinianus," a book on comedy, whose definition is a variation of the tragedy in the "Poetics":

"Comedy is an imitation of an action that is ridiculous and imperfect, of sufficient duration, [in embellished language], the various types [of embellishment are found] separately [encountered] in the [various] parts [of the work]; [presented directly] by people who act, and not [given] through narrative; through pleasure and laughter effecting the purging of similar emotions. It has laughter for its mother[4]".

[2] Eco, U. (2003). *El nombre de la rosa*. Debolsillo, 83.
[3] Ibídem, 115.
[4] Cooper, L. (1924). Comedy is an imitation of an action that is ludicrous and imperfect, of sufficient length, [in embellished language,] the several kinds [of embellishment being] separately [found] in the [several] parts [of the play] ; [directly presented] by persons acting, and not [given] through narrative; through pleasure and laughter effecting the purgation of the like emotions. It has laughter for its mother. *An Aristotelian theory of comedy.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Laughter, Between Mockery and Joy

These likely spurious treatises on laughter stem from the assumption of its uniqueness; No author until now has theorized its two opposite expressions in joy and mockery, although Kundera allegorically outlined its manifestation, both angelic (joy) and diabolical (mockery), without daring to deepen and develop both concepts:

"When the angel first heard the devil's laughter, he was stupefied. That happened during some feast, it was full of people and everyone joined in, one after another, to the devil's laughter, which was fantastically contagious. The angel clearly understood that this laughter was directed against God and against the dignity of his work. He knew he had to react soon, one way or another, but he felt weak and helpless. Since he was not able to invent anything by himself, he imitated his opponent. Opening his mouth, he made a jerky, abrupt sound, in a very high tone of voice (similar to the one Micaela and Gabriela made on a street in a coastal city), but giving it the opposite meaning. While the devil's laughter indicated the absurdity of things, the angel's cry, on the contrary, aspired to rejoice that in the world everything was so wisely ordered, so well thought out and was beautiful, good and full of meaning.

Thus, the angel and the devil, facing each other, with their mouths open, produced more or less the same sounds, each expressing, in his cry, absolutely opposite things. And the devil, watching the angel laugh, laughed even more, better and more frankly, because the angel he laughed was infinitely ridiculous.

A laugh that makes you laugh is disaster. However, the angels managed to achieve some results. They fooled us all with their semantic imposture. There is only one word to designate his imitation of laughter and the original laughter (that of the devil). Today people no longer realize that the same external manifestation hides within itself two absolutely contradictory internal attitudes. There are two laughs and we have no words to distinguish one from the other. If we were to draw a line between these two states, on which members of a given society marked the preferred point of their humour, we could determine the degree of social sensitivity of a particular community[5]."

If we were to draw a line between these two states, on which members of a given society marked the preferred point of their humour, we could determine the degree of social sensitivity of a particular community.

Mockery_____ Joy
Disdain _____ Compassion

Mockery is to disdain as joy is to compassion. To cite an example, let us envision the image of an elderly woman slipping at the edge of a pool and falling into the water;

[5] Kundera, M. (1984). *El libro de la risa y el olvido.* Barcelona: Seix Barral, 96 – 97.

those readers more prone to mockery will laugh at the occurrence, whereas those more inclined to compassion will feel horrified.

Similarly, the news of the marriage of the company's unattractive secretary will bring joyful laughter to the compassionate, while it will awaken mockery in those spectators more inclined to disdain.

Comedy has always boasted, by virtue of this distinction, a perverse air.

Ettore Scola's film Ugly, Dirty and Bad (Brutti, sporchi e cattivi, 1976) is undoubtedly the most successful creation of mocking comedy in recent decades, which has also made it the preferred target of sensitive aesthetes.

Is It Valid to Mock Others?

Political correctness, affirmative action, the empowerment of minorities, and other related movements have gained political and social acceptance due to the pernicious effects of mockery. These movements have emerged in response to a society that, in many cases, has used mockery and ridicule to belittle, marginalize, or discriminate against specific individuals or groups.

While laughter can be a powerful tool for reflecting on human situations and prejudices, it is necessary to distinguish between satire directed at the powerful and destructive mockery of the helpless.

Mockery directed at personal flaws or intrinsic aspects of an individual, such as appearance, weight, vices, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability, can be highly detrimental. Mockery that ridicules others with the aim of belittling, humiliating, or discriminating is neither ethically nor morally acceptable. It can promote stereotypes, foster intolerance, and contribute to discrimination and harassment.

Human flaws, such as personal or physical characteristics, are intrinsic to human nature and therefore immutable. Empathy and respect for the individuality of each person are fundamental to avoid ridiculing aspects beyond individuals' control, such as their appearance, disabilities, or other personal traits.

Satire

Satire, from ancient times to the present day, has been a powerful means of criticizing, denouncing, and questioning problematic aspects of society and power. This form of satirical expression has deep roots in ancient comedy, particularly in the works of Aristophanes, who in his comedies not only entertained the public but also criticized politicians, philosophers, and aspects of Athenian society of his time.

Aristophanes' works, such as "The Clouds," "Peace," or "The Wasps," used comedy and satire to address political, social, and moral issues. These works ridiculed public figures, showcased the mistakes of the powerful, and questioned political and social decisions. Satire in ancient comedy was not just entertainment but a tool to point out problems and raise social awareness.

Today, satirical television programs like "Saturday Night Live" or "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver," as well as satirical newspapers and magazines like "Le Canard Enchaîné" in France or "Private Eye" in England, continue this tradition of satire and comedy to criticize, denounce, and question the actions of politicians, public figures, and problematic aspects of society.

These modern satirical media are used to expose absurd situations, highlight injustices, question power, and highlight corruption. Additionally, contemporary satire

often seeks to raise social and political awareness among the public, fostering critical reflection and, in some cases, promoting political reform.

Satire, by challenging established social and political norms, can serve as a means to drive change, raise awareness of relevant issues, and stimulate reflection in society. Essentially, both comedy and satire are powerful tools that can trigger change and social consciousness by using humour and irony as vehicles to convey critical and transformative messages.

Comedy of Lies

On the other hand, situational comedy and farce focus on circumstances, social behaviours, or prejudices that shape everyday life. These forms of comedy do not centre on individual flaws but use exaggeration, irony, or parody to highlight absurd situations, social contradictions, or ingrained prejudices in society.

For example, farce can show how collective lies or the hypocrisies of a group collapse, revealing the falsehood of accepted ideas or values.

The laughter derived from these forms of comedy is not directed at individuals but at social structures, hypocritical norms, or deeply rooted lies and prejudices that crumble when exposed with humour.

Molière and his legacy: Nikolai Gogol, Federico García Lorca and Carlos Fuentes

Molière was a master of farce, and the hypocrisy denounced in comedies like "The Pretentious Young Ladies," "Tartuffe," and "The School for Husbands" retains its freshness even in our time because its theme is the greatest and most pernicious social convention allowed: the lie.

"Tartuffe" (Tartuffe, or The Impostor):

Written in 1664, "Tartuffe" is one of Molière's most famous works. The play centres around Tartuffe, a cunning and hypocritical religious hypocrite who deceives the wealthy Orgon, a man of high social status, into believing he is a pious and virtuous man. Tartuffe's manipulative behaviour extends to attempting to seduce Orgon's wife, Elmire, and gain control over Orgon's wealth and household. Despite Tartuffe's obvious deceit and wrongdoing, Orgon remains blinded by his admiration for Tartuffe's supposed religious devotion. The play exposes the gullibility and absurdity of blind faith and the danger of being deceived by outward appearances. It's a farce because of the absurdity of Tartuffe's actions and the exaggerated depiction of Orgon's naivety in trusting him, highlighting the hypocrisy prevalent in society.

Gogol's "The Inspector" (also known as "The Government Inspector") is a satire set in Tsarist Russia. It revolves around a case of mistaken identity when a low-ranking civil servant, mistaken for a government inspector, arrives in a small town. The townspeople, corrupt and fearful of exposure, treat the impostor with lavish hospitality, assuming he's the inspector they anticipate. Gogol's play is a biting critique of bureaucracy, corruption, and moral decay within Russian society.

Both plays use humor and irony to highlight societal flaws, especially the hypocrisy and corruption prevalent in their respective contexts. While "Tartuffe" critiques religious hypocrisy in 17th-century France, "The Inspector" targets the bureaucratic corruption in 19th-century Russia. Both plays satirize societal norms, institutions, and the individuals who exploit them for personal gain, presenting scathing commentaries on the human condition and societal vices.

"The School for Husbands" (L'École des maris):

This play, written in 1661, follows the story of two elderly brothers, Sganarelle and Ariste, who have contrasting views on how to raise and control their respective young wards, Isabelle and Léonor. Sganarelle is strict and overprotective of Isabelle, while Ariste allows Léonor more freedom. Isabelle, with the help of her maid, outsmarts Sganarelle by orchestrating a plan to marry the man she loves, Valère, against Sganarelle's wishes.

In "The School for Husbands," Molière explores the concept of marital control and guardianship over women. The play delves into themes of authority, trust, and the role of women in relationships, ultimately advocating for a more progressive attitude towards marriage, with emphasis on mutual respect and understanding.

Conversely, Federico García Lorca's "The House of Bernarda Alba" is a potent portrayal of the oppression and confinement experienced by women within a domineering

and authoritarian household. Bernarda Alba, the matriarch, imposes strict rules on her five daughters, confining them to the house and imposing her iron-fisted authority to control their lives, marriages, and individuality. The play explores themes of societal expectations, repression, and the consequences of an oppressive and patriarchal society on women's lives, illustrating the struggle for freedom and individual expression in the face of social constraints.

While "The School for Husbands" highlights the need for balanced and respectful relationships between spouses, "The House of Bernarda Alba" emphasizes the tragic consequences of extreme control and repression, especially concerning women's agency and autonomy. Both plays address the societal norms and expectations imposed on women, offering insights into the struggles and challenges they face within rigid societal structures.

"The Pretentious Young Ladies" (Les Précieuses ridicules):

This play, written in 1659 by Molière, satirizes the pretentiousness and affectation of certain upper-class women who imitate the manners and speech of the Parisian aristocracy. The plot revolves around two provincial young women, Magdelon and Cathos, who aspire to marry men of high status. They ridicule their suitors, two middle-class men named La Grange and Du Croisy, for not meeting their standards of refined behaviour and eloquence. However, as the story unfolds, it is revealed that the supposed noble suitors are, in fact, clever gentlemen masquerading as aristocrats. The play exposes the folly of superficiality and the facade of social status, making a mockery of the characters' exaggerated pretensions. The farcical element lies in the exaggerated mannerisms and the satirical portrayal of the characters' obsession with social appearances and their inability to see beyond superficial traits.

Carlos Fuentes takes up the farcical elements of this work in his novel "Where the Air Is Clear ", a novel that offers a panoramic view of Mexican society in the mid-20th century. Fuentes explores various aspects of Mexican culture, politics, and society, revealing the masks that people wear to navigate the complexities of Mexico City's urban landscape. The novel deals with political corruption, social stratification and the struggle for identity in a rapidly changing society:

> “Pedigrees to me, madam? Read his Bemal Díaz: here comes my great-great-grandfather, who was already Marquis of Aguasfloridas and a relative of Moctezuma when his people planted beets in the Danube[6].”

Both works address the social pretensions and facades that people create in a community built on lies. Molière's work addresses the affectation and vanity of the upper class prevalent in a particular social stratum during his time, using a comic and satirical approach. In contrast, Fuentes' novel presents a broader exploration of social facades, delving into the complex and multifaceted nature of Mexican society, examining political corruption, cultural identity, and the masks people wear to navigate their lives.

Despite differences in time, cultural context, and narrative form, both works share a common thread in criticizing social conventions and the illusions that people construct

[6] Fuentes, C. (1968). *La región más transparente.* Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 158.

to fit into certain social norms or to achieve social status. Both reveal the absurdity and superficiality of lies.

The tragedy of laughing

The critique of lies and social intrigues is consolidated in farce, unmasking prejudices or inconsistent behaviours in society without hurting specific individuals.

We should ask ourselves if the laughter provoked by farce is nothing more than a cry in the desert for those who desire to build societies based on truth.

Schopenhauer saw it this way when he argued that comedy reveals the futility and absurdity of human existence much more directly than tragedy does. While tragedy, despite its painful and heart-rending elements, often implies a kind of nobility or greatness in suffering, comedy exposes human weaknesses and illusions in a crude and mocking manner without even offering the remedy of mourning or tears, which leads to a deeper sadness.

In comedy, human weaknesses, the defects of society, and the absurdities of existence are ridiculed. Comedy, in its most faithful expression, is a reflection of the trivial and vain aspects of human life, immersing us in the entertainment of laughter, preventing us from reflecting on the gravity of the issues being portrayed.

For if crying is the natural pain reliever, laughter is the philosopher's stone that allows us to enjoy the tragic and painful aspects of existence. People who laugh uncontrollably at funerals demonstrate this, just like those who practice sadomasochism. I particularly recall a presentation about my family's history during my seventh semester of Social Communication at Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá; I presented the family tree of my ancestors. The stunned silence of my classmates when I told them that my surname linked me to Colombia's first President moved me. I burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, simultaneously inexplicable. Only today do I understand that the laughter was caused by their sudden respect for my past after years of indifference; an artificial respect caused by the same social convention described by Carlos Fuentes above.

Such is God's wisdom that allows all men to turn pain into a climax of laughter.

This is why tyrants persecute and murder writers, playwrights and comedians who criticize them, those who spark laughter among their readers and viewers. Artists have the gift of making a people laugh until they lose their fear of those who govern them.

Entre más sufra una comunidad, entre más oprimida esté, más disfrutarán sus ciudadanos de las bromas, sátiras, anatemas y diatribas de sus cómicos.

In his work "The Book of Laughter and Forgetting," Kundera explores the importance of laughter and humour in situations of political repression and ideological oppression. Kundera prescribes that laughter can play a subversive role in society, especially when power tries to control or restrict individual freedom. Humour, according to Kundera, is a means to challenge authoritarianism and tyranny by undermining the seriousness of power structures and revealing the ridiculousness of oppressive ideologies. Kundera defends the idea that laughter can be a form of resistance against totalitarian regimes or repressive systems by demystifying power, encouraging freedom of thought, and challenging official propaganda. The ability to laugh at adverse circumstances can provide a sense of mental freedom and a critical perspective against oppression.

Some readers might have frowned upon reading my comparison between García Lorca's tragedy and Molière's comedy; their reaction is not much different from Chekhov's, who always complained that Constantin Stanislavski staged his plays not as comedies but as sad tragedies. Is it not possible, perhaps, to represent Bernarda Alba's heroine as an heir to the tradition of the Spanish picaresque novel?

Also, in 1992, with the young members of the Arte Facto Teatro group in Bogotá, we staged Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot" as a comedy, with sold-out performances that extended until 1994. The laughter in our shows contrasted with another production of Beckett's where liturgical silence was the sine qua non requirement, thus adhering to Peter Brook's classification of Beckett's theatre as "Holy Theatre[7]."

Therefore, it is not the text that defines a play as comedy or tragedy, but the interpretation of its actors. The richness of theatrical art derives not from the critical

[77] Brook, P. (1984). *The Empty Space* (College ed.). Atheneum, 42.

consideration that tradition assigns to a work but from the wit and sensitivity of its theatre practitioners.

Comedies are amusing because they show the extremes that most humans have to endure to confront a world of lies and injustices. We can condemn Tartuffe's hypocrisy, but at the same time, we can understand his cunning for deceit.

The dilemma that farce raises in each spectator is: do we have to resort to the same lies to survive in a society unwilling to digest truths?

Thus, the wife prefers the lie to her husband, saying that she loves him while seeing her lover, and the servant lies to his master claiming that he takes good care of his provisions while devouring his capons and then blaming the mice.

Origin and Symbolic Variations of Ugly Betty

The main conflict of the world famous comedy “Ugly Betty” was not unfamiliar to Colombian viewers in the mid-1990s; various melodramatic series of independent episodes presented during the midday slot often dealt with the story of a man in love with a capricious and materialistic woman who confided her sorrow to a socially maladjusted woman who he imperceptibly fell in love with.

However, the most direct influence on the original series by Fernando Gaitán is one of the secondary conflicts of the soap opera “La Rosa de los Vientos” (The Wind’s Rose”), written by Juan Camilo Jaramillo and directed by Julio César Luna.

Aired between 1989 and 1990, “La Rosa de los Vientos” develops the adventures and misadventures of Tomasito (Julio Sánchez Coccaro), a thin and awkward student with slicked-back hair, who sports braces, thick tortoiseshell glasses, and dresses in his father's inherited outfits.

Tomasito, who performs the function of the anti-hero throughout the soap opera, elucidates a canine-like loyalty toward Alejandro Martínez, the series' heartthrob due to his clear eyes, who must choose between María Cecilia Botero, Rocío Chacón, and Aura Cristina Geithner, divas representative of the beauty of the 1980s in Colombia.

Tomasito, who secretly harbours a passion for Aura Cristina Geithner, endeavours throughout the series to hide from her the dalliances of his irresistible friend, who, after prolonged anguish, ultimately decides on Rocío Chacón's heart.

This choice leaves the path clear for Tomasito, who manages to awaken the libido of Aura Cristina Geithner by wearing the latest brand outfits, buying contact lenses, replacing hair gel with gel, and getting rid of his braces to reveal a smile with even and snowy teeth.

This transformation is accompanied by concrete facts demonstrating that Aura Cristina Geithner's passion is neither superficial nor merely economic.

Despite its originality and melodramatic potential, Tomasito's subplot in La Rosa de los Vientos failed to impact the popular imagination, undoubtedly due to Julio Sánchez Coccaro's ungainly physique.

“Ugly Betty” would take up the actantial functions of this subplot and represent them in symbols more firmly rooted in Latin American melodramatic tradition.

Using Greimas' actantial model[8], the paradigm shifts are emphasized.

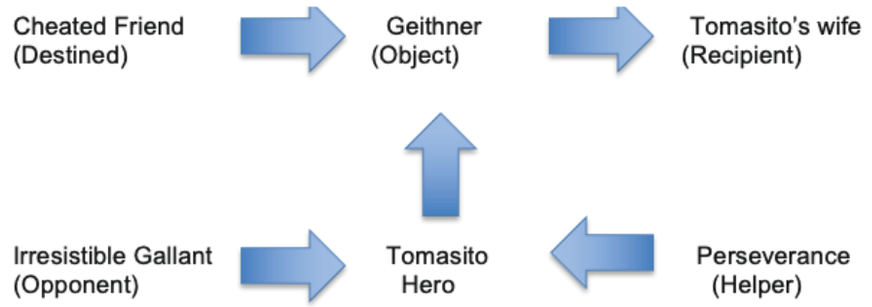
[8] Greimas, A. J. (1966). *Sémantique structurale: recherche de méthode* [Structural Semantics: Search for a Method]. Paris: Larousse, 180.

The most significant variation is in gender; unlike Jaramillo, Gaitán realized the difficulties that the Latin American audience had in identifying with male suffering.

Tomasito, whose conception was directly influenced by 1980s American comedies about nerds, lacks the grace and power of the beastly prince in “Beauty and the Beast”, a fable widely known in Colombia through a Californian series at that time.

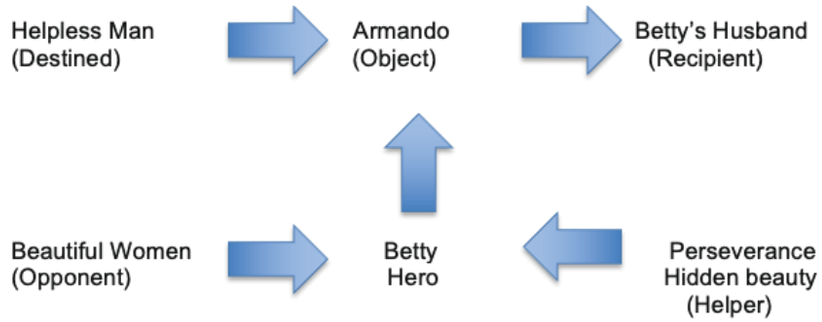
Perseverance in love is essentially feminine and contrary to pride, which is masculine in nature. Latin American culture is casuistically macho, a behaviour Borges associates with the feminine behaviour of being offended by trivial matters.

Diagram 1. Actancial model of *La Rosa de los Vientos.*



Tomasito fails to sympathize as a victim because what is expected of a man in such circumstances is pride and revenge, rather than patience and humility. Betty, on the other hand, embodies the feminine ideal of the mother who sacrifices herself for her husband and children. Her behaviour is not attractive, sensual, or liberal, but affectionate, protective, and conservative.

Diagram 2. Actancial model of *Ugly Betty*.



Romuald et Juliette (1989)

Gaitán was nourished in this respect by the 1989 French film “Romuald et Juliette” by Coline Serreau, an ironic comedy about an obese, black, and unattractive street

sweeper (Firmine Richard), mother of five children, who rescues her boss (Daniel Auteuil) from a plot that leaves him without fortune and wife. The limited success of Romuald et Juliette was largely due to the unattractive physical appearance of the conflict's heroine. Serreau aimed to make the protagonist street sweeper an unprecedented symbol of beauty, dissociating her from the iconic references imposed by mass media, to contextualize her in a purely emotional dimension. The idea was not inappropriate: Cocteau and Spielberg had already shown in “La Belle et la Bête” (1946) and “E.T.” (1982) the attractiveness of ugliness. However, unlike her fellow directors, Serreau does not subject her heroine to the pathetic situations typical of misfortune; Firmine Richard is not a character but a stereotype of the enterprising African woman who never sheds a tear for her fate.

The performance also does not foster feelings of empathy or compassion: Firmine Richard's almost imperceptible eyes diminish the importance of her character, who performs her domestic duties diligently, which may inspire admiration in the viewer but remains intimidating. Daniel Auteuil, on the other hand, does not embody his best role, as despite his generous smiles, childish gaze, and sudden outbursts of anger toward the secretary who expelled the obese, black woman from his office, his passion reflects emotions closer to those of a vacuum cleaner salesman who has just signed a significant order than those of a lover.

But blaming the actors would be inappropriate; Serreau, who had already achieved success with “Three Men and a Cradle” (“Trois hommes et un couffin”, 1985), deliberately emphasizes the comedic elements of the plot to challenge the prejudices of the viewer this time. Indeed, the astonished gaze of Auteuil's children at the end of the film does not differ from that of the majority of viewers, readers reluctant to reassess deeply rooted symbols in cinema.

Her proposal is not without cynicism; from its beginnings, cinema has shaped the libido of its spectators. The emergence of a film star constitutes a process of symbolization where physical strength, a fresh face, fashion, money, power, and happiness converge, to the point that today a large mass of humanity places their fears and hopes in the private lives of their celebrities.

The mere title of “Romuald et Juliette” is indicative of its sarcastic tone; the viewer does not find Shakespeare's delicate words of love but a stiff discourse reinforced with mountains of flowers and limousines. If Serreau had chosen a slim, proportionate black actress, her film would have achieved greater diffusion, although its comedic, ironic, and grotesque vein would have been sacrificed to make way for melodrama, an unforgivable genre for a female film director in France, a nation that nonetheless still venerates “Les Misérables”.

Ali: Fear Eats the Soul (1973)

Gaitán's second important variation in “La Rosa de los Vientos” occurs in the helper's role. While Tomasito relies on his perseverance, unable to employ the broad shoulders of Bête, Betty ends up revealing a slim and attractive silhouette, with a surprisingly beautiful face even without glasses.

Before Betty, the most popular ugly woman in the Western world had been Dulcinea del Toboso, an idealized peasant by the knight of the sorrowful figure. Kundera rightly writes that the scene in which Don Quixote demonstrates to Sancho his passion

for his beloved by bouncing on the ground synthesizes the way in which love is approached in the West: from a laughably masculine approach:

“Don Quixote decides to love a certain lady, Dulcinea, although he barely knows her (there is nothing here that should surprise us: when it comes to the “wahre Liebe”, true love, we already know that the beloved matters little). In chapter twenty-five of the first part, he retires in the company of Sancho to the desert mountains, where he wants to show him the greatness of his passion. But how can I show that a flame burns in my soul? And how to prove it, furthermore, to someone as naive and crude as Sancho? Then, on the steep path, Don Quixote undresses, leaving only his shirt and, to show his valet the immensity of his feeling, begins to do somersaults in the air in front of him. Every time he is face down, his shirt falls off his shoulders and Sancho sees his penis swinging. The chaste member of the knight presents a spectacle so ridiculously sad, so heart-breaking, that not even Sancho, with his rustic soul, can endure it any longer, he mounts Rocinante and flees at full speed[9].”

[9] Kundera, Milan (1991). “Don Quichotte décide d’aimer une certaine dame, Dulcinée, bien qu’il la connaisse à peine (il n’y a rien là qui doive nous surprendre : quand il s’agit de la « wahre Liebe », de l’amour véritable, nous savons déjà que l’aimé n’importe guère). Au chapitre vingt-cinq de la première partie, il se retire en compagnie de Sancho dans les montagnes désertes, là où il veut lui montrer la grandeur de sa passion. Mais comment prouver qu’une flamme brûle dans mon âme ? Et comment le prouver, de surcroît, à un être aussi naïf et fruste que Sancho ? Alors, sur le sentier escarpé, Don Quichotte se déshabille, ne garde que sa chemise et, pour exhiber à son valet l’immensité de son sentiment, il se met à faire devant lui des sauts en l’air avec culbutes. Chaque fois qu’il se retrouve tête en bas, la chemise lui glisse sur les épaules et Sancho aperçoit son sexe qui ballotte. Le chaste petit membre du chevalier offre un spectacle si risiblement triste, si déchirant, que même Sancho, avec son âme rustaude, n’y tient plus, il enfourche Rossinante et s’enfuit à toute allure”. *L’Immortalité: Roman.* Paris: Gallimard, 236 – 237.

This vision leaves the woman without a voice; Dulcinea, in fact, barely notices Don Quixote throughout the novel. His ugliness, moreover, is plausible due to the stark portrait that Cervantes paints of society; Dulcinea will never progress aesthetically, economically or socially.

Gustavo Bolívar is a Colombian screenwriter that has achieve power and money in Colombia writing series on drug dealer's bios tand their fixation on plastic surgeries, through which any man or woman can achieve happiness:

> "Catalina never imagined that the prosperity and happiness of the girls of her generation were dependent on the size of their bra[10]."

Decade before Bolivar's sacralization of such decadent ideology, Gaitán makes the transformation from rejected to beautiful, undesirable to desirable, inept to apt, and grotesque to harmonious, appears plausible. The discovery of beauty in the socially despised was admirably portrayed by Fassbinder in "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" ("Angst essen Seele auf", literally translating to "Fear Eats the Soul"), a 1973 film in which Emmi (Brigitte Mira), a sexagenarian German street sweeper, falls in love with and marries Ali (El Hedi Ben Salem), a black Arab immigrant, causing a scandal among her children. Fassbinder discovers in the elderly woman the tall, proportionate, and muscular body of Ali the moment he steps out of the shower, prompting her exclamation: "Du bist schön!" ("You're beautiful!").

While Fassbinder chose his hero based on the criterion of a rough face and a graceful body, Gaitán conceives Betty as immaturely beautiful; her silhouette is hidden behind a layer of heavy clothing, originally designed to hide obesity or old age, while her face is overloaded with glasses, braces, and hair that covers her forehead with childlike insistence.

The influence of Hans Christian Andersen's most famous fable cannot be overlooked.

The Ugly Duckling

The origin and symbolic variations of the ugly duckling can be traced from a spiritual dimension to the Bildungsroman and from there to the stages of spiritual enlightenment associated with mysticism.

The body, unlike the spirit, as Descartes reminds us in his Meditations, is bound to change from year to year from the moment of birth and to undergo the alterations typical of illness and old age.

Like Andersen's duckling, Betty is the ugly one in her family, neighbourhood, and workplace, but it is precisely because of the segregation resulting from this consideration that Betty suffers the possibility of withdrawing from the world to develop her intelligence. Andersen confessed that of all his work, the fable of the ugly duckling summed up his life

[10] Bolívar, Gustavo (2005). *Sin Tetas no hay Paraíso*. Quintero, 7.

because during his childhood, he had been ostracized because of his bulging eyes and disproportionate body, until the world recognized the fruits of his genius.

Jean Paul Sartre recounts a similar experience in "Les Mots", his autobiography, in which he describes how his grandparents called him a water rat and refused to enter the house if he were present. The transformation of the duckling into a swan is, in reality, the change from a physical universe to another of a spiritual nature, in the case of Andersen and Sartre, from that of the despised physical to that of literature.

Gibbon had already written, referring to Muhammad: 'Conversation in society refines the spirit, but it is solitude that begets genius.' Betty endures an inner solitude that the viewer shares throughout the series; her sufferings are continuous, although she is aware that as an ugly person, she has no choice but to be intelligent, as a poet sings.

Betty has to move from one universe to another, distancing herself from the tastes of her parents and siblings to embrace those of the sophisticated class to which she is destined to belong. But her process of maturity is not so much spiritual as it is aesthetic. Betty has to learn, aided by a friend, which symbols awaken not only Armando's love but also that of the large audience following her misadventures day by day; the end of her orthodontic treatment coincides with her decision to dress according to fashion standards, a happy and indispensable coincidence in a melodrama that has tormented its heroine for several years.

Betty's taste, typical of the working class, gradually changes to conform to the criteria of the wealthy class to which she aspires for the love of Armando.

Pygmalion

There are several literary sources that address this transformation, with George Bernard Shaw's 'Pygmalion' being the most memorable of the twentieth century. Eliza Doolittle is a Covent Garden flower seller who has the fortune or misfortune of accepting the proposal of the phonetics professor Henry Higgins to turn her into a lady of society, a proposal that actually arises from a personal bet he made with Colonel Pickering, who questions his friend's phonetic skills. Although 'Pygmalion' was presented as 'A Romance in Five Acts,' its comedic air flirts with the melodramatic; the tea scene, in which Eliza blurts out an obscenity amid refined conversation, is no less important than the one where she throws her slippers at the man who educated her for a world from which she can no longer exile herself.

Despite the romantic connotations of its title, Shaw strove first as the director of the play and later as the writer of its explanatory epigraph to debunk the romantic aura that inevitably arises between a sexagenarian bachelor and his teenage pupil. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who portrayed the first Professor Higgins, even took the liberty of concluding the work by throwing flowers at Eliza, openly defying Shaw's instructions. 'Yo soy Betty la fea' takes up some elements of 'Pygmalion,' although it gradually relegates the comedic vein to its secondary characters.

Certainly, at first, Betty is the target of mockery by her co-workers as well as the audience, due to her eccentric tastes, but that mockery diminishes to turn into admiration, first because of Betty's work achievements and finally as a result of her integration into the consumer society.

The heroes and heroines of Latin American melodrama are not, after all, laughable celebrities. Shaw understood better than any other playwright that in an era averse to the

pathetic and to optimism alike, irony offered the only possibility of reviving comedy, much like Ibsen had transformed tragedy through the self-determination of his characters.

Ancient Comedy, Origin of Melodrama

As in New Attic Comedy, Shaw is aware of the tensions inherent in a rigid social structure, where economic power seems to be the only redeemer.

While in the comedies of Menander, Plautus, and Terence a free man could not marry a slave unless she was bought and freed, in 'Pygmalion,' Eliza's fate seems hopeless because Higgins, the man who has made her a member of London's aristocracy, shows no intention of marrying a poor maiden. It's only with the reappearance of Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, in a black suit and hat, that the audience anticipates the marital union of the protagonists, as Eliza is now the daughter of a rich heir.

Shaw strives to give credibility to this change of fortune, which allows his works to be often interpreted as dramas.

However, the anagnorisis or recognition, common in ancient Greek tragedy (Oedipus, Electra, Iphigenia in Tauris), ends up being the characteristic seal of comedy, from the Athenian citizen in Terence's 'Eunuch,' who recognizes his sister in the slave Pannfila, anagnorisis that allows her violator and lover to marry her, to the pair of friends who discover the exchange of personalities of their lovers in 'The Importance of Being Earnest,' or the tidy executive who discovers the woman of his dreams behind the outdated attire of his secretary.

Melodrama, which Gramsci defined as the language of the people, refers to collective and ancestral manifestations and speeches validated by the popular national democratic expansion of the mid-nineteenth century. Its plots echo those of Shakespeare, Goldoni, Molière, and Lope de Vega, who in turn drew from the Commedia dell'Arte. The unexpected changes of fortune, the succession of coincidences, the timely anagnorises, and the deus ex machina were approved due to the happy ending, which even the ancient Greek audience preferred over the tragic one:

> "... the poets accommodate themselves to the spectators and write according to their preferences. But this is not the pleasure given by tragedy: it is more a pleasure characteristic of comedy[11]."

The coincidence of events that favour the happy ending, being plausible in comedy due to its absurdity, and the audience's license towards mockery and ridicule, are assumed as dramatic in melodrama. The verisimilitude of Latin American soap operas, therefore, requires a certain complicity towards economy and social mobility since popular taste is reluctant, due to its festive nature, to intimate reflection typical of art and philosophy. The economic considerations in 'Yo soy Betty la fea' are barely outlined; the melodramatic viewer prefers to believe that Betty wears outdated clothes because of her taste rather than her limited purchasing power. Betty's talent as a secretary is admirable not so much because of her efficiency, which is actually the minimum expected from a professional, but in comparison to her excessively incapable and superficial environment. This exaggeration also takes up the ideals of the American dream since Betty doesn't achieve success through her charms - which constitute her climax - but through her perseverance and perspicacity.

Stereotypes, Comic Villains

The actantial function of the opponent in 'Yo soy Betty la fea' is conventional in melodrama: beautiful, scarcely intelligent women who gain the admiration of men due to their resemblance to models in celebrity magazines and movie stars. Betty, who could well have been portrayed as a heroine of ugliness, a sharp critic of the ideas imposed by the media, anticipating the teenage protagonists of “Ghost World” (Zwigoff, 2001), resignedly accepts her aesthetic disadvantage. The ethical-narrative discourse of melodrama is not, after all, compassionate but submissive and vindictive - according to the parameters seen in the Metaphysics of Narration. Betty demonstrates this by touching the heart of a glamorous woman, to whom she tearfully confesses that she has what she, as an ugly person, has never had.

The Misfit as Comic Hero

The conception of the comic hero not as a rebel but as a misfit marks the transition from ancient Attic comedy to the new, a result of Menander's comic genius. His characters, role models for Terence, Molière, Shakespeare, Guthrie, and numerous Latin American soap opera scriptwriters, are pariahs continually exposed to ridicule due to their lack of understanding of the rules, conventions, and prejudices of their society.

Betty embodies, as a maternal and hardworking woman, the submissive heroine, whose personal brilliance must go unnoticed due to innate ridicule. This premise is clearly exposed in the opening credits of the series, where her parents are alarmed by her appearance; her character is irreversibly comic because her actions are carried out in a society that discriminates against those who are unable to care for their appearance.

[11] Aristóteles, *Poética*, 1453c.

The melodramatic viewer is also complicit in this oppression: 'If I were a misfit...' is the conditional phrase that triggers the laughter of those who believe they are socially appreciated.

However, this attitude is indicative of the most ingrained fears, beautifully expressed by Walt Whitman:

> *Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,*
> *Master of all, or mistress of all—aplomb in the midst of irrational things,*
> *Imbued as they—passive, receptive, silent as they,*
> *Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less important than I thought;*
> *Me private, or public, or menial, or solitary—all these subordinates, (I am eternally equal with the best—I am not subordinate;)*
> *…*
> *Me, wherever my life is lived, O to be self–balanced for contingencies!*
> *O to confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.*

Betty suffers humiliations, mishaps, and setbacks until she understands that only she is to blame for her disgraces and distresses. The happy ending of the soap opera does not depend so much on her dramatic actions as on Betty's re-education, who, correcting her ignorance, validates the ideology of the status quo. Such a stance is, of course, compatible with the predicates of consumer society; Betty achieves success as she buys high-heeled shoes and trendy dresses, indispensable utensils for those aspiring to be socially accepted.

Betty's ridiculous nature at the beginning of the series is significant, on the other hand, for Latin America's tendency toward mockery.

Unlike the United States, Latin America is not yet a continent concerned with political correctness, a circumstance that has allowed the novels to lean more towards ridicule than joy. Fernando Gaitán, however, balances the doses of mockery and joy in each episode of the series; the viewer mocks Betty's naiveties while also laughing at her resourcefulness in solving her boss's problems.

Serious and Comic Heroines

The actantial function of the sender in 'Yo soy Betty la fea' is not unfamiliar to melodrama and the novel; the main character of Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment", Raskolnikov is redeemed by Sonia, the helpless prostitute with whom he will suffer his captivity. But the representation of the female role as an active protagonist is unusual in soap operas and literature.

Hedda Gabler, like all Ibsen heroines, carries a tragic aura due to her emancipation from the virgin/whore duality that permeates the collective subconscious in the West.

Bernard Shaw's heroines sometimes take precedence over their male contemporaries due to their wit and their author's preference for comedy: Mrs. Warren, Commander Barbara, and Candida are complex characters, makers of men, if not history. However, Joan of Arc ends up in the stake due to her daringness.

Scheherazade

But the most influential symbolic variation in the conception of the protagonist of 'Yo soy Betty la fea' can be traced in Middle Eastern literature, in Scheherazade, the protagonist of the main conflict in 'The Book of One Thousand and One Nights.'

Armando is the attractive and powerful man who acts based on a superficial understanding of women, an ignorance that involves him in countless conflicts from which only Betty can redeem him. Like King Shahryar, Armando despises secretaries whom he seduces for fleeting moments before they are dismissed by his father. His behaviour, ancestral in Latin America, eventually allows Betty's hiring, who unlike her predecessors, remains in her position. Armando belittles her from the beginning, expecting her resignation, but Betty's perseverance ends up touching him. From then on, his secretary, as wise and astute as Scheherazade, will charm him with stories that both of them will experience not only in their fashion magazine but also in the personal life of their families.

Armando's marriage is the culmination of Betty's purpose, that of educating him to recognize women not as objects but as human beings; only then will love be possible, and with it, the consolidation of the actantial function of the sender: Armando becomes Betty's husband at the end of the series.

It is true that in the original Colombian version, Orozco's versatility and Abello's bland performance present Betty as a character of strength, while reducing Armando to the role of an affected or even stiff lover. But new versions in new languages and new countries corroborate the intentions of the scriptwriter. Betty is the heroine of the series both on a masculine and feminine level since it is she and only she, through her intelligence and resourcefulness, who saves the company from bankruptcy and wins her

protagonist through a sensuality that is not limited to sexual attraction. In this sense, Betty embodies the ideal of seduction that fascinated Baudrillard.

The verisimilitude of the main conflict in 'Yo soy Betty la fea,' that of Betty and Armando's falling in love, is not the result of their characters' social status - in fact, Betty does not receive an inheritance that would allow her to connect with Armando's parents' interests - but rather of her willingness to help her beloved throughout the series. This tour de force leads her to share part of her private life with Armando before the audience and to witness, according to the ancient Greek proverb, from this joint intimacy, the ignition of their love.

In our century, the disdain that Marxist intelligentsia shows towards melodrama has largely been influenced by the work of the Frankfurt School:

> 'Serious art has been set aside for those for whom the oppression and hardships of their lives are already mockery of seriousness, and for whom leisure time is not only a cause of happiness but also an incentive to remain in the production line[12]»..'

However, it is worth asking whether this disdain corresponds to a certain confusion of sensibilities, easily dispelled by assuming the festive and comic air of situational comedy, typical of soap operas.

[12] Adorno & Horkheimer (1947), (Op.Cit.). Página 135.

Ontology of Property

A millionaire dies whispering the word "Rosebud". A newsreel about his life is being projected in a small room. The newsreel director, visibly dissatisfied with his work, orders one of his reporters to discover the relationship between "Rosebud" and Kane, believing that the true personality of Kane will be deciphered in this riddle.

Although the reporter confesses his failure towards the end of "Citizen Kane" (Welles, 1942), the camera pans and reveals to the audience the answer. As we watch Kane's old belongings being consumed by the fire, we recognize the sled he used as a child. The sled is thrown into the fire, and the camera captures for a few seconds the word "Rosebud" painted on its surface. The film concludes with the sign that we saw at its beginning: "No Trespassing." Although the reporter confesses his failure to his director, the director, like any other viewer, becomes aware of the complexity of the human being.

While "Citizen Kane" emulates the theme, lighting, and structure of "The Power and the Glory" (1933) by William K. Howard, Welles's debut is much more complex than its predecessor.

As in "The Trial" (1962), Welles turns the structure of his film into a labyrinth. Borges understood that the riddle of "Rosebud" is a secondary conflict, but Kane's sled is not mere incinerated junk. That toy was the inanimate companion of young Kane, and its persistence in the basements of Xanadu bears witness to the child's attachment to the only entities that never betrayed him: his possessions.

But is a toy an inanimate entity for a child? The "Toy Story" films start from the premise that it is not. Decades before them, the presence of the sled among the belongings of the powerful and lonely Citizen Kane corroborates this. Children engage in dialogues with rocks and animals, a reality that, while refuted by adulthood, remains the reality of the child.

It is not the awareness of the father that causes the child's first trauma, as Freud claimed, nor his image in the mirror, as Lacan prescribed. It is the loss of the child's phenomenological environment that marks his ontological schism. The child's identity is formed with the human beings around him, but their absence and changeable nature make them ungraspable. This is why the child clings to the inanimate, whether it's a Teddy Bear, a doll, a tricycle, or a sled.

Kane's betrayed childhood, his optimistic youth, and his mournful old age remain in our minds as traits of a character full of mystery. The fact that Kane is selfish, manipulative, and vengeful makes him even more interesting. By approaching life from a metaphysical perspective, Welles, like Homer, Cervantes, or Shakespeare, represents a character from its eternity.

In a documentary included with one of the recent video editions of "Citizen Kane," directors such as Martin Scorsese and Ridley Scott admit the influence this work has had on their own. The viewer learns, for example, that Welles demonstrated his mastery by darkening the main character in a certain scene to highlight the waitstaff at a resort. Reaffirming his comments, we discover that these film directors revere the cinematic technique of a director who was as concerned about his cinematic technique about the metaphysics of its content.

The fact that certain Welles productions such as “Othello” or “The Trial” suffer from elementary sound problems highlights the importance of the metaphysics of his cinematography. The emphasis on his impeccable technique is an effort to associate Welles' career with the work of Hollywood craftsmen. The aforementioned documentary, after adding that the photographer of Citizen Kane was Gregg Toland, and after noting that the original writer of his film script was Herman J. Mankiewicz, reduces Welles' creative aura to that of an orchestra director. But the actor, producer and director that he was transcends with his metaphysics the aesthetics of his generation to move new viewers every year.

The documentary echoes the refrains formulated by defenders of the United States' mass film production system or by biographers who limit themselves to discussing the films Welles directed in Hollywood for RKO. Any discussion of Welles's thought is omitted; the reader memorizes instead trivia about an alcoholic screenwriter, a trendy director of photography, and a solvent production company subsidiary of RCA.

Welles's metaphysics has been discreetly confused with gossip. The cause of this reticence is cultural. Welles stages the misery of the powerful, men or empires consumed by their ambition. How to analyse the man who caricatured millionaire William Hearst, exposed the manufacturing of the U.S. war against Spain, and, sent to Brazil for propaganda purposes, directed a documentary about the poverty of fishermen (Jangadeiros)? Updating these impertinences, how to analyse the filmmaker who makes a movie about the miseries of the private life of William Gates, denounces private interests in the U.S. war against Iraq, and, sent to Caracas by the UN for bureaucratic purposes, directs a documentary denouncing the tyrannies of Cuba and Venezuela?

Unlike Laurence Olivier, Welles does not renounce the innocence of his characters; the excesses of Othello and Macbeth are involuntary, products of the social conditioning of celebrity, power, and independence. But it would be inappropriate to highlight Welles for his political statements: his characters are also variations of arrogant men—Kane, Mr. Arkadin, and Charles Clay—or victims of a selfishness they do not wish to control. Welles is not interested in the society that acts through institutions or legislative bodies; he is interested in the society that shapes the character and destiny of the individual in childhood. The mystery of "Rosebud" in "Citizen Kane" becomes irrelevant to the journalists of "News on the March," precisely because their readers are not interested in the conflicts of their childhood, nor do they understand that it is in that age that the illusions and disillusionments of a lifetime are forged.

Having lost his second wife, Kane finds another possession that identifies him, an extension of himself, such as an arm or a lung: a snow globe, an object that transports him to his childhood, when an alcoholic father mistreated him, and a stern mother protected him. His disillusionment never knows guilty parties; how can his protector be accused of abandonment? His mother—like every mother—only desires his happiness. But this "happiness" lacks empathy and is preconditioned by the world. The genuine happiness of childhood must be sacrificed for future prosperity. This imperative is categorical in the United States, where the poor, powerless, and dependent man earns the most denigrating epithet in the English language: loser.

In "The Labyrinth of Solitude," Octavio Paz attributes both a tender and sinister behaviour to American housewives. Although his diatribe could apply to any ambitious mother anywhere in the world, Charles Foster Kane's mother exemplifies it best. When

he was a child, he sensed her suffering before leaving; scoundrels like his father would not be lacking on his path. Unable to blame the author of his drama, Kane strikes Mr. Thatcher, the banker who will educate him in the best schools and universities in the world. Reluctant to acknowledge his efforts—Thatcher will make his pupil one of the wealthiest men in the United States—Kane communicates his resentment to him before his death:

"I would like to be everything you have hated."

A childish comment that reveals Kane's ignorance of himself. Only knowledge frees man from his miseries, and since this knowledge arises in conflict with the morality of consumer society, Kane ends up seeking solace in a melancholic stupor, conveniently relieved by the purchase of entities that remain faithful to him, properties like furniture, household items, and animals. His attitude, far from inspiring compassion, pleases the capitalist system that Kane has always admired. His drama is internal. For the journalists and readers of "The Inquirer," Kane is a celebrity: the modern hero whom all men and women must emulate.

The encrypted conflict in "Citizen Kane" is also metaphysical. Welles stages the memories of various individuals about Kane, a famous man whom each person knew at a specific stage of their life.

In their socioanalysis of capitalist society, "Anti-Oedipus," Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari conclude that each individual re-enacts their miseries within a family context. But it is in the originality of this re-enactment that we discover the genius of an artist.

"Citizen Kane" is, without a doubt, the only film of the twentieth century manufactured in Hollywood that will survive the judgment of the years to come, because it expresses through the plastic arts the ontology of property, common to men of all eras and societies.

Ontology of Envy

Melanie Klein traced the origins of envy to early childhood. She observed, based on the studies of Joan Riviere, that babies, after identifying with the possession of the mother's breast, suffer when realizing that they do not belong to them. In response to this realization, some frustrated babies bite their mother's breasts in order to destroy them:

> "Jealousy fears to lose what it has; envy is pained at seeing another have that which it wants for itself... . The envious man sickens at the sight of enjoyment. He is easy only in the misery of others. All endeavours therefore to satisfy an envious man are fruitless... This view is consistent with the view described by Chaucer in The Parsons Tale: 'It is certain that envy is the worst sin that is; for all other sins are sins only against one virtue, whereas envy is against all virtue and against all goodness [13]."

We will refer to the active envious individual, who experiences insomnia and becomes a voyeur of the lives of others. For them, his own joys and sorrows are closely related to the impending downfall or triumph of the people they envy. This depiction of an envious character aligns with Dante's description of those condemned to the depths of hell, forced to keep their eyes open with thorns and eternally contemplate the lives of others. Intrigue is their defense and action mechanism, since the intriguer is nothing more than the actively envious, in the same way that the liar is the actively ignorant.

In Aristotle's work "Rhetoric," he delves into three types of envy that torment envious individuals: envy of property, envy of power, and envy of intellect. While the first two can be easily pursued by anyone who desires them at any stage of life, Aristotle believed that the third type, envy of intellect, remained unattainable for most.

I disagree with this perspective. Just as one can amass wealth through hard work and achieve fame through public speaking, becoming an intellectual is attainable through extensive reading and contemplation, regardless of one's age. It is true, however, that intellectual envy is the most visceral and dangerous, comparable in the universe of fashion and vanity to the envy of beauty and social intelligence.

Aristotle's reference to Socrates, who challenged and humiliated all of Athens with his pointed questions, exemplifies the Aristotelian emphasis. Notably, Socrates, as the son of a washerwoman of African descent, added, as a member of a lower caste, an additional layer of insult to his detractors.

As a poet, Aristophanes captured this social unrest by making Socrates a comic character in his comedy "The Clouds." In this work, Socrates is portrayed as a divine being who distances young Athenians from their farming parents, encouraging them to embrace idleness, reading, and reflection instead of performing the physical labour in the fields that their relatives expect of them. The comic effect of "The Clouds" derives from the social conflict between an agrarian society and an urban one, between a working class and one dedicated to leisure and education. The fact that Plato had included Aristophanes among the characters in his "Symposium" exonerates him from

[13] Klein, M. (2002). *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works.* Simon & Schuster, 182 - 189.

recriminations, although in some sections of “Socrates' Apology” we read that “The Clouds” certainly increased the animosity against Socrates in Athens.

Schopenhauer argues that Platonic dialogues are not just idealistic but also idealized. He suggests that Socratic conversations are portrayed as impossible because Socrates' interlocutors were often unwilling to accept the weight of his arguments and would instead resort to insults, which could ultimately lead to physical violence and even murder.

Throughout my life, I have observed such behaviour: individuals, when faced with defeat in arguments, often turn to disgraceful actions rather than making efforts to correct their errors or challenge themselves with new projects and inventions, which are encouraged by constructive criticism.

Unfortunately, we still live in a society where it is often deemed prudent to tolerate ignorance and falsehoods in public discourse. This is especially true if we wish to avoid accumulating enemies, facing exile, or even risking our lives. As Ben Franklin once told President Adams after a heated debate during the American Independence era, correcting someone in public can turn them into an enemy. Such an enemy, recognizing their inferiority in a debate, may resort to acting in the shadows, conspiring with others who also feel threatened by the truth in a milieu of lies and deception. These individuals often suffer from envy and tend to organize groups with like-minded individuals who share their disdain for prominent figures.

Calumnies, or false accusations, can be easily formulated in the absence of the victim and spread through slander or defamation. This has been the fate of many historical figures, including Socrates, Julius Caesar, Ovid, Jesus, Seneca, Joan of Arc, Lucrecia de León, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mirabeau, Rasputin, Orson Welles, Martin Luther King, JFK Kennedy, Gandhi and John Lennon.

As a student, I vividly remember having teachers who reacted with anger when I corrected them on historical or literary matters. One claimed that Shakespeare was not a playwright but a writer of short stories, while another insisted that to write good movie scripts, one had to stop reading altogether. Due to the influence of such professors, I faced challenges in securing a job in Bogotá immediately after my graduation from Vatican's Universidad Javeriana in the 1990s. As a Jesuit later explained, I failed to conform to the hypocrisy valued by the hierarchies of the Catholic Church.

In today's context, these calumnies are euphemistically referred to as "Fake News." In the 2000s in Bucaramanga, a city where many shamelessly boast of their ability to conspire against newcomers under the motto "united we are invincible," a group of students and professors of a certain provincial faculty formed a collective. Their common bond was the fact that I had corrected them in public. Before my departure to India, they created two fake social network profiles impersonating me to spread lies about me. These creators were students who felt slighted in their egos after losing academic debates to their peers. The creation of these impersonations reveals the discomfort experienced by those who prepare superficially for teaching or believe they can acquire knowledge without reading enough books. They mistakenly assume that no colleague or student will ever correct them, whether out of prudence or diplomacy.

Once I had exposed them, I kindly recommended that they remedy their condition by reading authors like Proust or Lewis Carroll, a good starting point to heal their feeling of inferiority. In Proust's novels we discover that envy flows into every social visit, repressing itself until it spills over into the melancholy of his prudent characters; The apparent tedium of Proust's scenes is nothing more than the result of a hypocrite milieu, which is why Borges correctly labelled Proust's novels as “novels for women.”

Lewis Carroll, like Swift, immerses us in universes that are too similar to our own, and where his sweet and well-intentioned protagonists are attacked to death by deformed beings who cannot stand anyone telling them the truth.

Not surprisingly, said schemers celebrated my departure to Hindustan in 2010 with a party.

As the age of AI approaches, this false assumption that ignorance and falsehoods can thrive is crumbling before our eyes. The professor of the future will embody the character outlined by Juan Vives in the 16th century, one who possesses diverse skills, extensive reading, and a fair knowledge of languages.

Nietzsche speaks of a positive form of envy in which individuals aspire to surpass those they admire, using "admiration" to describe this feeling. The transformation of envy into admiration is only possible through repentance, a sentiment encouraged by Christian theology, as pointed out by Kierkegaard.

Ontology of dreams

I do not fear death and, as a consequence, I rarely suffer nightmares. In the last one I remember; I was facing an immense abyss in the middle of the night. I felt like I was falling, but instead of resisting the imminence of my end, I let myself fall in resignation. Then I felt immense peace of mind until I woke up.

In Kyrgyzstan they believe that nightmares correspond to hell and pleasant dreams to paradise, a vision that psychology and Buddhism corroborate; Both joys and pains are

mental states, illusions that the Being values according to social impositions, or as Kipling sings in his celebrated poem “If”:

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same

My mother told me that as a child she met a murderer, who sobbing confessed that he constantly smelled the blood of her victim wherever he went. Shakespeare punishes King Macbeth for his murders with sleepless nights:

Macbeth.
Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

Lady Macbeth.
What do you mean?

Macbeth.
Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

Sleep is, indeed the necessary encounter of our minds with our inner self, what in ontology is called the Being.

As nightmares reveal, this encounter is that of our inner self with the truth. When dreaming, hypocrisy and dissimulation cancel each other out.

The impossibility of lying, according to Swedenborg, is the sine qua non between this world and the spiritual. This is why, when dying, a murderer will always choose a hellish society for eternity; Heaven is not forbidden to him, but if he enters its domain of dazzling light, his face will no longer be able to hide his resentment towards others as he could do on earth. In paradise the murderer will look deformed, with his teeth exposed and his flesh red hot; His anguish will be greater when contemplating the beauty that emanates from the faces of the angels, who thus manifest their good intentions.

Freud, a frustrated dreamer

Doctor Sigmund Freud decided to record his dreams in a notebook he left on his night table. As a result, he wrote his influential “Theory of Dreams”, in which he claims to have deciphered the raison d’être of dreams: "Träume sind die königlichen Straßen zum Unbewußten." (Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious.) He became the father of psychoanalysis, that’s to say, the study of the soul or mind, which is no other philosophical specialization than ontology. As Giovanni Papini understood in “Gog”, Freud was a

frustrated poet that, wearing a physician's uniform, was able to gain the respect of the influential scientific community.

> "Poet by instinct and doctor by force, I conceived the idea of transforming a branch of medicine - psychiatry - into literature. I was and am a poet and novelist under the guise of a man of science. Psychoanalysis is nothing other than the transformation of a literary vocation in terms of psychology and pathology.
>
> "The first impulse for the discovery of my method comes, as was natural, from my beloved Goethe. You know that Werther wrote to free himself from the morbid incubus of pain: literature was, for him, "catharsis." And what does my method for curing hysteria consist of if not making the patient tell "everything" to free him from the obsession? I did nothing but force my patients to act like Goethe. Confession is liberation, that is, healing. Catholics had known this for centuries, but Victor Hugo had taught me that the poet is also a priest, and so I boldly replaced the confessor. The first step was given.
>
> "I soon realized that the confessions of my patients constituted a precious repertoire of "human documents." I was, therefore, doing a job identical to that of Zola. He took novels from those documents; I was forced to keep them to myself. Decadent poetry then drew my attention to the similarity between the dream and the work of art and to the importance of the symbolic language. Psychoanalysis had been born, not, as they say, from the suggestions of Breuer or the glimpses of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but from the scientific transposition of the literary schools beloved by me[14]."

Papini's sarcasm was not exaggerated. The disdain with which the Status Quo silence poets' attachment to their dreams was represented by Samuel Beckett's Pierrot, Estragon, in "Waiting for Godot":

> **Estragon.**
> I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.
>
> **Vladimir.**
> You should have been a poet.
>
> **Estragon.**
> I was. (Gesture towards his rags.) Isn't that obvious?[15]

Life is but a dream rounded by a sleep

[14] Papini, G. (2007). *Gog*. Lectorum, S.A. de C.V.
[15] Beckett, S. (2006). En attendant Godot = Waiting for Godot: Tragicomedy in 2 Acts. Grove Press: Distributed by Publishers Group West.

Estragon loves dreaming, for only there he's able to find himself. In another scene, he recriminates Vladimir, his life partner, for having woken him up. Vladimir, by contrast, hates dreams and prefers jokes. He has decided to bear the acridity of life entirely, though, at the end of the play, he understands the evanescent nature of reality, and wonders, as Calderon and Shakespeare, if life is but a dream rounded by a sleep.

> **Vladimir.**
> Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?

What we remember from ten years ago, or just a few hours ago, is it not akin to what we remember from a dream? Prospero's reflection at the end of "The Tempest" is not a simile or a metaphor, but a poetic conclusion about the equivalence between dreams and the memories of what we have lived.

Like Beckett and Calderón, Shakespeare transcends the fourth wall to express his nostalgia at the end of his play when the actors and their audience have left the stage; his verses are more moving as they confirm that with them, Shakespeare was also leaving behind his arduous and scarcely recognized career as an actor, director, and playwright, to dedicate himself to the bland tasks of commerce:

> *Our revels now are ended.*
> *These, our actors,*
> *As I foretold you, were all spirits*
> *And are melted into air, into thin air;*
> *And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,*
> *The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,*
> *The solemn temples, the great globe itself,*
> *Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,*
> *And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,*
> *Leave not a rack behind.*
> *We are such stuff*
> *As dreams are made on, and our little life*
> *Is rounded with a sleep.*

In another distant and hostile country, twenty years after "The Tempest," Calderón portrays in "Life Is a Dream" the drama of Segismundo. This man has been condemned since his birth by the astrologers in the service of the King of Poland, just like Oedipus, marked as a future parricide. Segismundo grows up imprisoned in a dungeon, convinced that the worst sin of humanity is to be born, an idea that later influenced Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy and his belief that we are mere puppets of the will of life.

Tormented by Christian remorse, the King of Poland decides to give his son a chance and releases him from his prison while he sleeps, dressing him in silken robes and ermine coats, and proclaiming him the heir to the throne. However, due to his hubris or arrogance, or possibly because of the resentment he has accumulated against the

world due to the belief in magicians who condemned him from birth, Segismundo throws a servant out of the window. This provides the king with the proof he secretly desired of his son's impiety, and Segismundo is returned to his prison while he sleeps, by order of his own father, with the same discretion with which he was enthroned. Isolated from the outside world, Segismundo wonders if what he experienced before was a dream or, if not, if his current existence, chained and in shackles, is a nightmare from the past.

I dream that I am here,
Chained in these prisons, and I dreamed that I was free.
What is life? A frenzy.
What is life? An illusion,
A shadow, a fiction,
And the greatest good is small;
For all of life is a dream,
And dreams are nothing but sheer dreams[16].

The Russian inventor Lev Sergeyevich Termen, better known as Léon Theremin, gained fame in the United States in the 1920s for his invention of the Theremin and his unique electronic music. However, in a drama reminiscent of that of Prince Segismundo, in the 1930s, Léon Theremin was deported from the United States to the Soviet Union under mysterious circumstances. After his return to the USSR, his life took

[16] Yo sueño que estoy aquí,
destas prisiones cargado;
y soñé que en otro estado
más lisonjero me vi.
¿Qué es la vida? Un frenesí.
¿Qué es la vida? Una ilusión,
una sombra, una ficción,
y el mayor bien es pequeño;
que toda la vida es sueño,
y los sueños, sueños son.

a radical turn, and he is known to have been under house arrest for a period and worked on research projects secretly for the Soviet government. During this time, Theremin said that his life and fame in the United States felt like a dream.

After his metaphysical encounter with the evanescent nature of lived experiences, Vladimir sees Estragon peacefully dozing off again and expresses his envy and hatred for his dependent character, akin to that of a slave, Arlecchino, and Sancho Panza, capable of fulfilling his daily ambition to satisfaction with a carrot and a good sleep.

Vladimir.
… He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot.

Throughout the entire play, Beckett has already manifested the fragile nature of our phenomenological time. Estragon and Vladimir can't recollect whether they were in the same place the day before waiting for Godot, nor they can discern the difference between Monday, Tuesday, or Saturday. Pozzo loses his watch and feels time has stopped. Facing the sunset, Vladimir is tormented by the idea that he's really contemplating a sunrise. Finally, in beautiful lines, Pozzo cries that all days in life are the same, regardless of our age and condition.

Pozzo.
(suddenly furious.) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?

In dreams we become playwrights

Joseph Addison has pointed out that when we dream, free from the body, we are simultaneously the stage, the actors and the audience in a play[17]. Theatre plays, like movies, are dreams indeed, as so many journalists and movie stars have claimed. Dramas, tragedies and comedies are dreamt by playwrights, directors and actors. For 90 minutes or so we are submerged in universes that contract or expand time according to our personal impressions. There are biopic films that bring us through an entire life, from birth to death, and thrillers that grip us to the seat, making us feel we were in the cinema for only half an hour.

Henry Bergson and Edmund Husserl approached the metaphysics of time from different perspectives. Whereas Bergson's duration (durée) is more metaphysical in nature, emphasizing the fundamental nature of time as a continuous flow, Husserl's phenomenology tends to focus on the structure of consciousness and how we experience time within that structure.

Both viewpoints, notwithstanding, reveal the dreaming nature of remembrance. What I remember of yesterday or twenty years ago is similar to what I remember from a dream.

[17] Borges, J. L. (1975). *El Libro de los Sueños*. Ciruela, Barcelona.

Vladimir.
Let him alone. Can't you see he's thinking of the days when he was happy. (Pause.) *Memoria praeteritorum bonorum [Memory of the good times gone by].*

Very often, dreams and memories blend together in the mind against our will, and we are surprised to learn that our recollections from the past are utterly wrong.

Estragon.
I'm unhappy.

Vladimir.
Not really! Since when?

Estragon.
I'd forgotten.

Vladimir.
Extraordinary the tricks that memory plays!

Buñuel, the reality of dreams

The cinema of Luis Buñuel has been keen on the subject. The Spanish director often said that he used to present dreams as reality and reality as dreams, for in dreaming we are also unable to distinguish what is real from what is dreamt. “The Discreet Charm of Bourgeoisie” (1972) represents, for instance, the memory of several failed dinners. We assume they are realistic until we see a wounded man who assures the guests he has been murdered. “The Phantom of Liberty” (1974) displays the absurdities of democracy as nightmares: the popularity of child pornography, the rise of murderers as film stars, the re-education of militaries, etc. In “That Obscure Object of Desire” (1977) a South American ambassador portrayed by Fernando Rey takes two different actresses (Carole Bouquet and Ángela Molina) for the same lover.

But it is in “The Exterminating Angel” (1962) where Buñuel presented the evanescent boundary between vigil and dream. About one hundred guesses go to a party from where they cannot escape. There is no other explanation for their inability to go out than they just don’t feel like they can do it. Hunger and anguish possess the house, making their lives together a nightmare. The film has been often presented as a horror film, for horror films are metaphysical by their very nature. They bring to the real world the unexplainable causes and consequences of which nightmares are made of.

“Coleridge wrote that waking images inspire feelings, while in sleep feelings inspire images. (What mysterious and complex feeling did the Kublai Khan, who

was the gift of a dream, dictate him?) If a tiger entered this room, we would feel afraid; If we feel fear in the dream, we give birth to a tiger [18].”

Dreams are spaces of meditation

In Phaedo, Plato distinguishes the soul from the body, giving more importance to the former:

“Is it not the separation of soul and body? And to be dead is the completion of this; when the soul exists in herself, and is released from the body and the body is released from the soul, what is this but death?

“There is another question, which will probably throw light on our present inquiry if you and I can agree about it:—Ought the philosopher to care about the pleasures—if they are to be called pleasures—of eating and drinking?

Certainly not, answered Simmias.

And what about the pleasures of love—should he care for them?

By no means.

And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body, for example, the acquisition of costly raiment, or sandals, or other adornments of the body?

[18] "Coleridge escribió que las imágenes que percibimos cuando estamos despiertos nos inspiran sentimientos, mientras que en el sueño, los sentimientos nos inspiran imágenes. (¿Qué sentimiento misterioso y complejo dictó al Kubal Khan, que fue regalado en un sueño?) Si un tigre entrara en esta habitación, sentiríamos miedo; si sentimos miedo en el sueño, damos a luz a un tigre .” Borges. J.L. (1975). (Op. Cit.) p. 3.

Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs? What do you say?

I should say that the true philosopher would despise them.

Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to get away from the body and to turn to the soul.

Quite true.

In matters of this sort philosophers, above all other men, may be observed in every sort of way to dissever the soul from the communion of the body[19]. ”

Plato’s demand for asceticism influenced former Christian anchorites and ascetics such as Saint Simeon Stylites, whom Buñuel portrayed in the 1965 film “Simon of the Desert”. He was particularly renowned for his ascetic lifestyle, which involved living for many years atop a pillar or column in the desert, hence the nickname "Stylites" (derived from the Greek word "stylos," meaning pillar). His most famous pillar was located near Aleppo in modern-day Syria. His practices included fasting, prayer, and exposure to the elements, were extreme even by the standards of early Christian asceticism. He spent many years atop the pillar, isolated from the world, as a form of penance and devotion to God. Pilgrims and curious onlookers would visit him seeking spiritual guidance, and he would communicate with them from his elevated position.

Plato prescribed that philosophers should dwell in the fields of observation and reflection, avoiding the daily distractions of survival. His philosophy coincides with that of many Indian gurus, Buddhists, Sufis, and Catholic monks. What they have in common is their search to be one with the Being. They imagination and creativity they experienced have been often described as day-dreaming.

Dreams, prophetic space where past and future converge

Borges quotes a testimony he got from an Asian tribe about dreams: "The moment you fall asleep, they explained to me, depending on your actions during the day, you go to heaven or hell." Ernesto Sábato expounds in “Abbadon, the exterminator”, such theory in reference to Romanian surrealist painter Victor Brauner, who in 1931 painted the work “Being-Portrait with eye extract,” an image he received in a dream, eventually a prophecy. In 1938 he got into a bar quarrel and was hit by a glass, losing his left eye.

> “I return to the soul that travels during sleep and can see things from the future, since it is freed from the body, which is what in man chains him in the prison of space and time. Nightmares are visions of our hell. And what we all achieve in dreams, mystics and poets achieve through ecstasy and imagination. "Je dis qu'il faut étre voyant, se faire VOYANT." And in one of those ecstasies, through that terrifying privilege of the artist, Victor Brauner saw his horrendous future. And he painted it[20].”

[19] Translated by Benjamin Jowett.

[20] Sábato, Ernesto (1981). "Regreso al alma que viaja durante el sueño y puede ver cosas del futuro, ya que está libre del cuerpo, que es lo que en el hombre lo encadena en la prisión del espacio y el tiempo. Las pesadillas son visiones de nuestro infierno. Y lo que todos logramos en sueños, los místicos y los poetas lo logran a través del éxtasis y la imaginación. 'Je dis qu'il faut être voyant, se faire VOYANT'. Y en uno de esos éxtasis, a través de ese terrorífico privilegio del artista, Victor Brauner vio su horrendo futuro. Y lo pintó.” *Abaddon el Exterminador.* Seix Barral.

Einstein mathematically demonstrated that, according to special relativity, as a person approaches the speed of light, time dilation becomes more pronounced. Theoretically, from the Newtonian universe, if someone could travel at a speed extremely close to the speed of light, time would pass much more slowly for that person compared to someone who remains on Earth. This means that if that person were to travel for a relatively short period at an extremely high speed, they would age less compared to people on Earth. From that person's perspective, they would have travelled into the future.

Einstein's great discovery, which has been scarcely highlighted, is that time is not linear but curved, and as such, it can be traversed towards the past or the present. Although the theory of relativity does not conceive a return to the past as possible due to the disruptions that would occur in the current universe, and in light of the limitations of our senses and the fragility of our bodies, we can conceive an immaterial consciousness that, surpassing such constraints, travels to the past and the future. This would be the explanation underlying the prophecy of Victor Brauner, as well as the visions of prophets, mediums, and visionaries, not to mention the scientists we will list later.

Since childhood, I have had the gift of dreaming of future events. I knew that my little sister would die a year before it happened, and that at a party, an enemy would be at my mercy, fearful that I would humiliate him due to my popularity, something that occurred without me humiliating him in either dreams or waking life. I previously mentioned my dreams about the destruction of Manhattan; I should add that when a friend wrote to me that he would be moving from Germany to New York, I became concerned about what happened on September 11th. I then had dreams of flying on a plane descending over the Hudson River and miraculously ditching without any casualties. Upon waking up, I wrote to him that I knew things would go well. Years later, the event happened just as I had envisioned, a plot depicted in the film "Sully" (2016).

While beginning my MFA in film and arts, I found an extensive bibliography about 16th-century Spain in Philadelphia. There, I read documents about Lucrecia de León, a purported prophet who published a book of her prophetic dreams, the most famous of which predicted the destruction of Philip II's Invincible Armada off the coasts of England under Queen Elizabeth's rule, whom he had courted in vain. I then crafted a 180-page film script, “The Spanish Prophetess," in which Lucrecia becomes involved in a conspiracy but later abandons it upon learning of their plot to assassinate the king. The film's ending is as surprising as Lucrecia's story and is not based on historical documents but rather on what I believed to be the most plausible scenario. Lucrecia not only dreamed her world but also predetermined it.

Since then, I have had dreams in which I see myself directing the film based on her life story, a film appreciated by the masses. In the most recent dream, those artists and academics who have segregated me throughout my life for my independence and free-thinking, always contrary to the socialist agenda of the 21st century, adopted new identities and disguised themselves so that while applying for jobs I was unable to recognize their past.

In "Man and the Superman," George Bernard Shaw describes heaven and hell as nations that any man and woman can enter and leave at will. He probably developed the concept from Swedenborg's writings, although he does not give him credit. According to the Swedish mystic, angels can go in and out of hell, but demons cannot stand the atmosphere of heaven, the bright light of goodness, so they throw themselves headlong to any dark crack they see, looking desperately to return to the darkness of hell, which is only lit by dim red lights, similar to those we see in burning charcoal.

Both Shaw and Swedenborg explain that heaven and hell are not only in the afterlife but actually in the current lives of all women and men. Whoever envies others is continuously suffering at their happiness and achievements.

Dante was also aware of this reality. His description of hell can be understood as an account of social life, in which souls are tormented by sins they pursued. In the second circle of hell, inhabited by souls consumed by lust, beings are ceaselessly buffeted by strong winds, symbolic of their inability to exercise self-control over their desires. The third circle, reserved for gluttons, features the damned submerged in vile slush, battered by relentless icy rain and hail. Their punishment reflects their overindulgence in earthly pleasures. In the fourth circle, the greedy souls are forever tasked with pushing heavy weights in opposing directions, representing their insatiable desire for material wealth and possessions. Moving deeper into Hell, the wrathful are submerged in the Styx River, where, according to Apuleius, "even the gods and Jupiter himself fear falling into the waters of oblivion"; forgetting the circumstances of what one claims with unbridled anger and hatred is a sign of madness and exposes its arrogant protagonists to ridicule.

In the seventh circle, those who committed acts of violence against others are submerged in boiling blood, suicides are transformed into thorny trees, unable to harm themselves in their immobility, tormented by harpies that defecate on them, and blasphemers lie on burning sands. In the eighth and ninth circles, fraudsters endure a range of punishments, from immersion in filth to encasement in flames. Treacherous individuals are condemned to freeze their feelings; they are submerged into Cocytus, a frozen lake, with each section reserved for specific types of treachery, including betrayal of family, country, and benefactors.

Dreams, the space where gods grant discoveries to hard-working women and men

How many inventions and discoveries have been based on dreams? It is impossible to maintain an honest inventory since most dreams fall into oblivion and are recovered in the present as déjà vu. “The Arabian Nights,” as recounted by the Arab historian Al-Ishaqi, tells the following tale:

> “In Cairo, there once lived a man who was once wealthy but so magnanimous and generous that he lost all his wealth, except for his father's house. He was forced to work hard to earn his bread. He toiled so much that one night, exhaustion overcame him, and he fell asleep beneath a fig tree in his garden. During his slumber, a drenched man appeared before him, took a gold coin from his mouth, and said, "Your fortune lies in Persia, in Isfahan; go and seek it." When he awoke at dawn, he embarked on a long journey and faced the perils of deserts, ships, pirates, idolaters, rivers, beasts, and men. Finally, he reached Isfahan.
>
> Inside the city, he laid down to sleep in the courtyard of a mosque. Next to the mosque, there was a house, and by the decree of Almighty God, a gang of thieves passed through the mosque and entered the house. The people inside the house awoke to the noise of the thieves and cried for help. The neighbours also shouted until the captain of the district's watchmen arrived with his men, and the robbers fled over the rooftop. The captain wanted to search the mosque, and there they found the man from Cairo. They beat him severely with bamboo sticks, and he was nearly on the verge of death. Two days later, he regained consciousness in prison. The captain summoned him and asked, "Who are you, and where is your homeland?" The man replied, "I am from the famous city of Cairo, and my name is Mohamed El Maghrebi." The captain inquired, "What brought you to Persia?" The man chose to tell the truth and said, "A man ordered me in a dream to come to Isfahan because that's where my fortune awaited. Now I am in Isfahan, and it seems that the fortune he promised was the beatings you generously gave me."
>
> Upon hearing such words, the captain laughed heartily and said, "You are a credulous and foolish man. Three times I have dreamt of a house in Cairo with a garden in the backyard, and in the garden, there is a sundial. After the sundial, there is a fig tree, and beneath the fig tree, there is a fountain, and beneath the fountain, there is a treasure. I did not believe this tale for a moment. Nevertheless, you, offspring of a mule and a demon, have been wandering from city to city based solely on your dream. I never want to see you in Isfahan again. Take these coins and leave."
>
> The man took the coins and returned to his homeland. Beneath the fountain in his garden (the one mentioned in the captain's dream), he unearthed the treasure. Thus, God blessed, rewarded, and exalted him. God is the Generous, the Concealed[21].”

I have included many imaginative and anecdotic stories that can be regarded as fictional, but dreams are also shared by scientists and mathematicians. I will, consequently, quote some of the most significant scientific discoveries that have been given to scientists in dreams.

Elias Howe's Dream and the Invention of the Sewing Machine

In the mid-19th century, Howe was working on inventing a sewing machine, a task that had challenged many inventors before him. He had made progress but was stuck on a critical component: the design of the machine's needle and thread mechanism.

One day, Howe was captured by a group of warriors and presented to their king. The monarch gave him 24 hours to invent a perfect working electric sewing machine, or he would face the death penalty. Howe worked tirelessly for hours, unable to find a solution to this cruel demand. As the 24th hour approached, he gave up, but as he stood before the king, he noticed the spears of the king's warriors had small holes in their tips.

[21] Burton, R. F. (1896). In *The Arabian Nights*. Banasthali.

Immediately, he realized that the key to his sewing machine's design was a similar concept: a small hole at the tip of the needle.

While being led to the gallows, Howe pleaded with the king to give him more time, claiming that he had already found the solution to make his automatic sewing machine work perfectly. Then he woke up. It was four in the morning. He immediately began working on his sewing machine, incorporating the eye of the needle at the tip, allowing the thread to pass through it. His innovation enabled the sewing machine to function correctly, creating a lockstitch, and revolutionizing the efficiency of sewing.

Albert Einstein's Dream and the Theory of Relativity

"Einstein said his entire career was an extended meditation on a dream he had as a teenager," explained Reverend John W. Price in an interview with John H. Lienhard, professor emeritus of mechanical engineering and history at the University of Houston on the radio program "Engines of Our Ingenuity."

According to Price, Albert Einstein's revolutionary theory of relativity, specifically the special theory of relativity that includes the famous equation $E=mc^2$, was inspired when Einstein found himself sledding down a mountainside at an incredible speed in a dream. As he accelerated, the colors of his surroundings faded until they became the brilliant white of light.

Upon waking, Einstein concluded that he had reached the speed of light, a vision that allowed him to understand the fundamental nature of time and space. This dream greatly influenced his subsequent work on the theory of relativity, leading him to postulate that the speed of light in a vacuum is constant for all observers, regardless of their relative motion, a cornerstone principle of his theory.

Friedrich August Kekulé's Dream and the Structure of Benzene

"I was returning by the last bus, riding outside as usual, through the deserted streets of the city... I fell into a reverie, and lo, the atoms were gamboling before my eyes. Whenever, hitherto, these diminutive beings had appeared to me, they had always been in motion. Now, however, I saw how, frequently, two smaller atoms united to form a pair; how a larger one embraced the two smaller ones; how still larger ones kept hold of three or even four of the smaller ones; whilst the whole kept whirling in a giddy dance. I saw how the larger ones formed a chain, dragging the smaller ones after them but only at the ends of the chains... The cry of the conductor, 'Clapham Road', awakened me from my dream; but I spent the rest of the night putting on paper at least sketches of these dream forms," as recounted in the book "Serendipity, Accidental Discoveries in Science" by Royston M. Roberts[22].

Before Kekulé's dream, chemists struggled to understand why benzene displayed unusual stability and reactivity patterns. Kekulé's insight, inspired by his dream, proposed a hexagonal ring-like structure for benzene, where carbon atoms formed a closed loop with alternating single and double bonds. His dream-inspired idea revolutionized organic chemistry, providing a key breakthrough in understanding the structure of benzene and, by extension, other organic compounds.

Otto Loewi's Dream and the Chemical Transmission of Nerve Impulses

Otto Loewi, an Austrian-American pharmacologist, was dedicated to unravelling the mysteries of nerve transmission. One night, Loewi found himself performing an experiment involving frog hearts that would demonstrate the chemical transmission of nerve impulses.

Upon waking, Loewi immediately set out to reproduce the same experiment he had performed in his dream. He isolated the fluid from a frog's heart and applied it to another frog's heart. Remarkably, he observed that the heart rate of the second frog decreased, confirming his dream-inspired hypothesis. This ground-breaking experiment provided concrete evidence for chemical transmission in nerve impulses, fundamentally advancing our understanding of neurobiology.

Niels Bohr's Dream and the Atomic Model

Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist renowned for his contributions to atomic theory, had a significant but somewhat mysterious connection between his dream and his ground-breaking work. One night, according to an article titled "Pillow-Talk: Seamless Interface for Dream Priming Recalling and Playback" by Edwina Portocarrero from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and co-authors, "Bohr had a dream in which he was sitting on the sun with all the planets whistling around tiny strings."

Bohr's model proposed that electrons occupy specific energy levels or orbits around the nucleus, a concept that played a pivotal role in the development of atomic and quantum theory.

[22] Roberts, R. M. (1989). *Serendipity*. Wiley.

Dmitri Mendeleev's Dream and the Periodic Table

Dmitri Mendeleev (1834-1907) wanted to somehow organize the 65 known elements. He knew there was a discernible pattern related to atomic weight, but it remained elusive. Later, Mendeleev reported, "In a dream, I saw a table where all the elements fit as required. Upon waking, I immediately wrote it down on a piece of paper." Mendeleev's words were quoted in "On the Question of Scientific Creativity" by Russian chemist B.M. Kedrov.

This is how the periodic table was formed. The arrangement he saw in his dream was so precise that it even revealed that some elements had been measured incorrectly; they were placed in his periodic table according to their atomic weight, which was not even known at the time.

The periodic table he created became the foundation of modern chemistry and revolutionized the way scientists understand the elements.

James Watson's Dream and the Structure of DNA

James Watson, a prominent biologist along with Francis Crick, is recognized for discovering the structure of DNA, one of the most significant breakthroughs in biology. On the night of February 28, 1953, after tirelessly attempting to decipher DNA molecules, Watson found himself descending a spiral staircase.

Upon waking, Watson connected the image of a twisting spiral staircase with the double helix structure of DNA. This dream-inspired insight enabled him and Crick to accurately model the DNA molecule. The double helix structure of DNA, with its two intertwined strands, became a central concept in molecular biology and genetics, providing profound insights into heredity and the fundamental processes of life.

Dreams, the space where Beings commute

Swedenborg points out that although hypocrisy can be performed in the vigil, it is noticed and commented on the spiritual world. In his Note books, Nathaniel Hawthorne, wrote in 1868:

> “A man, when awake, thinks well of another and trusts him completely, but he is disturbed by dreams in which that friend acts as a mortal enemy. It is finally revealed that the dreamed character was the real one. The explanation would be the instinctive perception of reality.”

Rebelais also explains in Pantagruel:

> “Good, replied Pantagruel, ancient and authentic, it is by dreams, because, in dreaming, with conditions which describe Hippocrates, lih. Peri enypnion, Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Synesius, Aristoteles, Xenophon, Galen, Plutarch, Artemidorus Daldianus, Herophilus, Quintus Calaber, Theocritus, Pliny, Atheneus and others, the soul often foresees future things. There is no longer any need to prove it to you. You hear it, for a vulgar example, when you see, when the children are well cleaned, well sated and breast-fed, sleeping soundly, the nurses go off to frolic in freedom, as for this hour licensed to do whatever they want, because their presence around the bers' would seem useless. In this way our soul, when the body sleeps and digestion is complete in all places, nothing else being necessary until it awakens, frolics and sees its homeland again, which is heaven. From there it receives a notable participation of its first and divine origin, and, in the contemplation of this infinite and intellectual sphere, whose centre is in each place of the universe, the point of the circumference (it is God, according to the doctrine of Hermes Trismegistus), to whom nothing happens, nothing passes away, nothing decays, all times are present, observes not only past things in lower movements, but also future things, and relates them to his body, and through its senses and organs, exposing them to friends, that is, to the foreteller and prophet [23] .”

I can only add my own testimony to these accounts, which I have already described in my novel “New Manhattan Soirées” ("Nuevas Tardes en Manhattan,") published in 2000 in Bucaramanga and in 2002 in Barcelona.

I was writing the chapters of that novel in Oporto in 1998, following the prevailing neopositivist ideology, with characters who boasted of their education and ridiculed any display of spirituality with sarcasm and wit, à la Voltaire, when I saw a woman crying inconsolably. I approached her and saw her face scarred by channels that her tears had formed from her eyes down her bare cheeks.

"Why are you crying?" I asked, recognizing her as Virgin Mary.

"Because no one believes anymore," she said, heartbroken.

"What can I do?" I asked, deeply moved.

"Read Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles."

Then I woke up screaming; it was four in the morning. I took my Bible in ancient Greek and read the recommended passage; in it, Saint Paul and Saint Peter concluded that to be a Christian, one should not follow rituals but simply refrain from scheming against others and abstain from enslaving prostitutes.

Immediately, I revised my novel until late in the afternoon; Mario Suárez, its protagonist, became a solitary theologian who set out to define God–a task I was eventually asked to perform in England five years later. Over the following months, I worked on developing several ideas based on my readings in the Library of the Catholic University of Oporto, some of which had been refined over decades and are presented for the first time in this book.

I will mention two events, one prior and one subsequent to that dream. Days earlier, I had left a candle burning on a volume of the complete works of the philosopher Cioran in French. I forgot to extinguish it and went to sleep. Around one in the morning, I dreamt that I clearly saw from my bedroom a glow emanating from the living room; then I woke up and indeed saw the dreamt glow in my living room. I got up and discovered the

[23] Rabelais, F. (1913). “En cette façon notre âme, lorsque le corps dort et que la concoction* est de tous endroits parachevée, rien plus n'étant nécessaire jusques au réveil, s'ébat et revoit sa patrie qui est le ciel. De là, reçoit participation insigne de sa prime et divine origine, et, en contemplation de cette infinie et intellectuelle sphère, le centre de laquelle est en chacun lieu de l'univers, la circonférence point (c'est Dieu, selon la doctrine de Hermès Trismégistus), à laquelle rien n'advient, rien ne passe, rien ne déchoit, tous temps sont présents, note non seulement les choses passées en mouvements inférieurs, mais aussi les futures, et les rapportant à son corps, et par les sens et organes d'icelui, les exposant aux amis, est dite vaticinatrice et prophète.” *Gargantua et Pantagruel (Vol. 2*). Larousse, 33

melted candle setting fire to the book's cover. I managed to extinguish the incipient fire, whose flames reached up to the ceiling, with a blanket. Miraculously, the book barely lost the image on its cover.

That dream with the Virgin would completely alter my destiny; at the age of 30, I became more solitary and reclusive towards a world that opened all its charms to me. I began to publicly debate with those who mocked spirituality or metaphysics, whether it be a teacher, a dean, a politician, or a student. My refutations of the prevailing discourse in the media earned me enemies who wasted no time plotting against me; eventually, I was expelled from that university.

Since then, my life has been a continuous pilgrimage around the world, exporting the ideas contained in this book not only through my words but also through actions. If before such an epiphany I felt obligated to my superiors, be they deans or provosts, from then on I started following my own inner calling, compelled by my renewed perception of the truth.

Being God

§ 1
We experience eternity by acting in the world.

§ 1.1
Acting is a twofold activity: personifying and observing.

§ 1.2
In volume II of “Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,” Arthur Schopenhauer celebrates the experience of art as a unique opportunity for individuals to transcend the limitations of the self. When we engage with true works of art, we enter into a state of contemplation that allows us to momentarily disengage from the relentless striving of the will. In this state, we lose our sense of individuality and become absorbed in the pure contemplation of the object of art. We effectively move beyond the boundaries of our individual selves and desires to become connected to a deeper, universal, and non-individual reality, which Schopenhauer twinned with the Platonic Forms.

§ 1.3
Schopenhauer, as Kant, distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime in art. While beauty pleases our aesthetic senses, the sublime has a more profound effect. The sublime, according to Schopenhauer, is capable of providing a more profound and intense experience of the dissolution of individuality.

§ 1.4
While art allows us a temporary dissolution of our transcendental self, knowledge leads us to our permanent dissolution in Being, a state that only the wise, saints and mystics achieve.

§ 2
In the previous chapter I analysed Xenon’s arguments against movement. Movement was not the main issue of Xenon’s paradox--thought posterity believed so, but rather our perception of a world with infinite places within space. There are infinite spaces from A to B, as they are infinite instants from 1 to 2. Our perception of the world scans all those infinite manifestations in order to create what we call reality.

§ 2.1
We know time and space are infinite, we also know numbers can be counted ad infinitum. Nonetheless we tend to believe we live in a finite universe due to its decaying nature. But we should not consider the state of death as representative of this universe, but rather the end of a series of moments, each one eternal in its own self-realization.

§ 3

Filmmaking provides proof of eternity. We only require sixteen frames per second in order to achieve the impression of reality. But sixteen frames amongst how many? Amongst an infinite number. The eye captures infinite movement and space but escapes from it through time.

§ 3.1

Phenomenological time, therefore, is not an infinite series, but a limitation that constrains our perception.

§ 4

The Kantian philosophy is useful for those interested in understanding our limited perception of the natural world. In reality, we, as Beings are part of an unnatural inexistent world. We are an immaterial entity able to disguise itself before a mask or face at will. We accept we are not part of the mineral world in order to consolidate our ties with animals and plants. But we also know the world would be in a better shape with animals and plants alone. Is the man that biped we see in Leonardo’s drawing? What a wonder of shapes and beauty, but I'd rather see mankind in the so-called Will, Reason, Mind, Spirit, Discourse, Ideology, Common sense, Public Opinion, History, Voice of the People, Knowledge, Law, Dogma, Art, Faith, Fashion and all the other immaterial stock that has made of men and women what we are.

§ 4.1

The man of “Kritik der reinen Vernunft” has a very limited imagination, as a Golem.

§ 5

One of the assumptions of the philosophies of Heidegger and Sartre is that each of us experiences Nothingness when we are bored, or, to use the term favoured by Sartre's emulators, when we feel nauseated by life. Sartre, it should be made clear, did not coin this term; the original title of his first novel was "The Extraordinary Adventures of Mercier." His publisher suggested "La Nausea" against the will of the novel writer.

Until now, detractors and defenders of these discourses have limited themselves to discussing whether melancholy is a temporary or permanent state of the mind. Such an attitude misses the essential point, which is to ask ourselves whether or not it is possible for us to experience Nothingness.

§ 6

Kantian philosophy judges inappropriate to dwell on metaphysical problems such as infinity, the soul, immortality, and God. As a consequence, most of the philosophers of the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, that is, the philosophers of the countries that control the global media, have resigned metaphysical speculation to evangelists, astronomers and furious atheists such as Dawkins.

A counterproductive renunciation, if one takes into account that the originality of Kant's philosophy is metaphysical.

§ 6.1

In his description of eternity, Swedenborg posits a universe without time and space. Kant, who dedicated a treatise to refuting Swedenborg, posits, based on negative reasoning, that the a-priori categories of reason are, precisely, time and space. On the other hand, the invention of the faculties and categories of the Kantian understanding is a work no less imaginative than the invention of Dante's celestial ranks and hierarchies. What Kant delivered to his society was a new language, stripped of scholastic references and overloaded with neologisms à la Newton.

§ 7

Inductive and deductive logic are the tools that polish knowledge. Pierce made a great contribution to logic by underlining the importance of abductive judgments in the production of knowledge. That his notes–As Aristotle’s, have been mostly overlooked, proves just how unpopular for the Academy are the ideas that ignore positivism--a philosophy that places genetic engineering over poetic inspiration.

§ 7.1

Abductive judgments are intuitions or revelations, and occur when the Kantian transcendental self dissolves to achieve its dissolution in Being.

§ 7.1.1

Artists work with intuitions or abductive judgments; They are not, as Aristotle prescribed, insane beings or possessed by a god–a view that reduces them to passive entities, but individuals who renounce their principle of individuation to dissolve with the universal Being.

§ 7.1.2
Michael Chekhov prescribed that an actor is above all a medium who interprets the psychic needs of her audience.

§ 7.1.2.1
This perspective explains why the fame of a writer, singer or poet lies in his or her ability to connect with crowds. That Isaiah, Aeschylus, Muhammad, Dante, Cervantes or Shakespeare manage to exalt 21st-century readers despite the temporal distance is also a result of their renunciation of the principle of individuation.

§ 7.1.3
The discrimination that artists have faced since the instauration of ancient Greek philosophy is due to the fact that the exact sciences have disparaged abductive judgments. Plato, for example, censored poets in his ideal republic because they could not explain the exact causes behind their inspired compositions. On the other hand, Aristotle did not censure them but relegated them to a role more related to entertainment, medicine, and historical narration.

§ 8
I'm the Being.

§ 8.1
Descartes was right in constructing his metaphysics on the cogito as certainty of existence, that immaterial substance which people have called, according to the general state of mind, soul, consciousness, self, ego, or Will. Kant reformulated this concept by distinguishing 'pure apperception,' or unconscious, from 'empirical apperception,' or conscious.

§ 9
The Being without consciousness of its simultaneity is the ego

§ 10
In the enchanting realm of Arcadia, the Eden of the wise, where the living and the dead converge through the power of imagination, two figures, Hugo Noël Santander Ferreira, an independent writer, actor, and filmmaker with 50 books published on Amazon, who had been expelled from 11 universities worldwide for reintroducing metaphysics into a positivist environment, share this revealing dialogue:

HEGEL: Essence unfolds in the fabric of history. There is a forward movement, akin to the transition from religion to philosophy.

HUGO: We accept your concept, Friedrich, based on the assumption that the Being perceives reality as we do. After all, you were not educated in the theory of relativity like us. Can you imagine a Being capable of freely moving from the future to the past?

HEGEL: My mind can grasp the concept indeed.

HUGO: So here you have a Being that can choose from all possible manifestations of itself.

HEGEL: Why would the Being also be interested in living any primitive state of life?

HUGO: Because the Being plunges into forgetfulness before assuming any new form; such is its love, that it has sacrificed itself to experience the life of all creatures of creation.

HEGEL: But when would the Being be, then?

HUGO: That is perhaps the most difficult concept to comprehend: the simultaneity of the Being. Where the Being is, there am I, even though I am here. The Being is within me now, but it is also within you at the same time.

HEGEL: And the proof of such simultaneity?

HUGO: Feeling in a state of correspondence.

HEGEL: Love.

HUGO: You have also been a poet...

HEGEL: We all yearn for what we could have been. Let's get back to the point.

HUGO: Don't you feel that when you truly love someone, you want to be the other?

HEGEL: It may be.

HUGO: Swedenborg describes marriage as the union of intelligence and intuition.

HEGEL: I am more familiar with Böhme.

HUGO: Now, imagine yourself as a being who can be both intelligence and intuition at the same time, like an actor playing two roles to represent a play.

HEGEL: But how can we be equals? Both of us, for example, have very little in common.

HUGO: Thanks to forgetfulness. Let's say, for instance, that you lose your memory. To cure you, doctors give you a book recounting all the details of my life. Since you have forgotten everything, you accept such a lie. The process is reinforced by the fact that everyone else says the same.

HEGEL: Sigismund, the character in Calderón's play "Life Is a Dream," is the name of the prince who went through such an experience.

HUGO: Now, apply this test to your own life.

HEGEL: Why would I do that?

HUGO: For the sake of experience. Because from the beginning, you have been the sole inhabitant of the universe until you discover the emotions of a game; we will discuss the playful nature of reality later. To fulfil your desire, you design players on both sides in what initially appears as a chessboard. The game begins, and your interest in the play is so intense, your identification with the characters so profound, that you decide to become all of them. Like a talented actor, you play one character and then another, and so on. But since imagination is your essence, at some point, you find yourself within chess pieces that think and live like you, following rules that (don't forget) were carefully designed by you. And your love for acting is so great that, like a teenager demanding a highly realistic game that allows them to be on a battlefield, you demand such perfect identification with each character that you end up forgetting who you really are.

HEGEL: In other words, we are the "Being" in the universe "U," where Being = U - (U - Being), the universe without the universe without us.

HUGO: We are the Being who has forgotten everything except the destiny unfolding on the stage of the world of a single individual. Now I refer to you as your most intimate self, the one that remains "inside your head" (although such an "object" has never been found), when you close your eyes and lie down. The same Being you experience in every night's dream. The entity that can create and destroy worlds and empires with a single thought. Or so we assume, because at dawn, you wake up with the impression of having lived in other bodies, in other spaces, but with no material evidence at your disposal.

HEGEL: You are approaching the concept of Geist. The Spirit, the Mind, manifests in reality as we perceive it! Men are nothing more than instruments of the mind.

HUGO: I couldn't accept such instrumentalization after reading Kierkegaard. The Being is not a living organism, as you can see, although any living organism expresses the will of the Being. It is, at least for us humans, a perennial certainty: the same you had yesterday; the same you have now, enabling you to exist; the same you had when you were eight years old, when in lonely nights, you saw a child designing the paths of what we now know as a life devoted to philosophy; the same that supported you in your love for an unwanted child. You, yourself, and with it, all the immateriality that constitutes the ego.

HEGEL: The Being must have self-awareness.

HUGO: What if it chooses not to, like a stone? Because the Being also enjoys variety and forgetfulness. We, as humans, perceive the Being as that entity that you are and will always be, because you have no proof of its destruction. I refer to that line of thought that often gets lost in thought and yet is always present. I refer to that feeling that, after a great loss, turns into lava that burns your lungs and destroys the world. You will always be you, and that's all you need to live.

HEGEL: And the movement of history?

HUGO: I tell you that there is no other reality created by the present perceptions of the mind. And as the mind delights in embodying lives that must unfold according to a certain set of rules, we enjoy, as humans, the illusion of a universe in a state of destruction and renewal. We are all pieces moving on an infinite chessboard. Often, we see other pieces captured by the enemy. We simply strive and work to delay our end as much as possible because we have assumed that the captured pieces are not only out of the game but also out of existence. But then, when we are captured, we realize with amazement that we are in a new space on the board, with different rivals and teammates, governed by a weaker king and a less capricious bishop.

HEGEL: I can imagine it, like in a dream we don't want to wake from, and upon doing so, we find ourselves in another reality, longing to return to the immateriality of that dream, however torturous it may be.

HUGO: Exactly! While you stay asleep and yet awake, you realize that you are experiencing something unreal: the images of a dream. But then, suddenly, those castles of imagination take on form, smell, and volume. The sensation is so real that you can't even consider the possibility that it's a dream. Now, I must point out another certainty. The landscapes of a dream are not material at all but a succession of feelings, which the

mind occasionally perceives as embodied in material objects at the will of the Being. Such perception is necessarily filtered through the memories of a specific being. Here, I must note to my readers that Freud's theory of dreams is correct when it finds a relationship between dream images and experiences lived by any being. But Freud did not delve into the relationship between dreams and memory. Do we remember all our dreams? I don't have that impression when I'm surprised by a face or a gesture that triggers a sudden flash of a previous dream. We only remember the dreams that our Being chooses to remember.

HEGEL: It would be a controversial topic to accept that the Being also delights in experiencing nightmares.

HUGO: Ernesto Sabato wrote about it in the early 1970s. The impetus for his metaphysical research was abandoned after Borges made some acerbic comments. The universal Argentine could not accept that the horrors of nightmares he so loved to read and write about would be the reward in the afterlife. Only those who overcome the fears of the Being, even those of their nightmares, attain the wisdom of the gods. And here, I must mention that God is the Being or the beings with supreme wisdom, and I speak in the plural because their greatest virtue is to manifest simultaneously as Being without ego, everything, and nothing.

HEGEL: You describe a fascinating world. I will approve it once I see it manifested in my own experience...

HUGO: I already see you being reborn in this context: "The Invention of Morel" is the name of a novel by Adolfo Bioy Casares that depicts a man who has decided to relive a series of happy moments for all eternity. The Being has designed the universe with a similar machine, but with one exception: the scenarios to choose from are those we have witnessed throughout human history, with animals, rocks, and spheres competing for the conquest of the universe. The Being has projected itself in time and space to create new universes in which to delight in the act of contemplation, and by contemplation, I mean the convergence of feelings.

§ 11
The Being reproduces himself with variations in new beings.

§ 12
Picture yourself The Being as a mother who conceives a child. The pleasant feeling of creation is common to artists, women and the Being, for they reproduce their substance in new beings. A paradoxical movement of the Being explains all difficulties in a parent-son relationship: that of sacrificing his own identity as Being for another being (in order to allow its existence), and that of suffering his decay and destruction for another being.

§ 13
A calm spirit before the ups and downs of life communicates wisdom, just as an arrogant ego that despises his fellow men communicates evil. Picture an entity that feels

unique, separate, special. We fear it's capable of all possible evil. It falsely believes there are but separate, independent Beings in strife, for it is a Being unable to recognize itself in others. It doesn't discover in love the identity with others. The Being is me, and also you, my fellow Beings.

§ 14
The Being is feeling and feeling is the Being.

§ 14.1
According to Emerson, Böhme wrote that Love was more important than God in order to expose the content of Being. Swedenborg identifies feeling with love, but his understanding of love was puritan. Love is the maternal feeling, and it's able to include all feelings in harmony, as an emperor who keeps Rome stable by outmanoeuvring his children's conspiracies. Hate and cruelty are not the exception.

§ 14.1.1
Each feeling requires its opposite in order to be appreciated.

§ 14.2
Hume, in this respect, was right to point out that all judgments are based on comparisons. If any sportsman can speak of his unlimited happiness and sadness when remembering his glorious days, what would be able to express the Being when revealing his heart to his creatures, that is, to itself? The emotion of the first outburst of life in the universe, the death of the first man by his brother's hand, the rise of the unwanted child that wades along the Nile, the sweet agony of the wisest man in Greece, the self-sacrifice of the Being in Gethsemane and the tears of the Russian matron who lost her eight sons at war? A cousin who came back from the death, told me to have seen the face of God. She judged her own life by comparing it with the disposition of Jesus of Nazareth. Her humiliation was as great as the joy she preserves of her glimpse at eternity.

§ 15
The creations of the Being are beings identical to itself, for the Being continues being in each of his creations. The concept of transubstantiation may illustrate this simultaneity.

§ 16
The Being is able to reproduce reality at will in the same way I reproduce new worlds inside my mind. The fact that many of such flights of the imagination--as Kant coined them, come to reality, is a commonly overlooked metaphysical certainty on the creative nature of the Being. Recent writings on the power of the "mind" and "intention", as well as Paulo Coelho's short-stories, are cogitations on this certainty.

§ 17
The most conflicting moment of the being is tediousness. Paradoxically, recent self-declared atheists philosophers made of this stage the entire object of their metaphysical inquiry.

§ 17.1
Emptiness is nothing more than the resentment of the being against its primitive purpose as Being.

§ 17.2
"Spinoza and Schopenhauer shared an interest in understanding the fundamental force that shapes our lives within nature. However, Schopenhauer diverged from Spinoza's view of God as the substance of this nature. Due to his pessimism, Schopenhauer held a sense of resentment towards the Creator or the very concept of Being itself. Consequently, despite his critical stance towards the celebrated philosopher Hegel, Schopenhauer also developed a theological system. This system, albeit characterized by negativity and pessimism, was rooted in Kant's concept of 'das Ding an sich' and centred on the idea of Being as 'The Will' ('Die Wille')."

§17.2.1
Schopenhauer was a 19th-century genius trapped in his own ego and often overlooked the efforts and sacrifices of those who accompanied him on his phenomenological journey. He called Hegel a 'theologian' in a vain attempt to escape his fate as a metaphysician of his generation. This paradox, in which Arthur Schopenhauer found himself trapped, was masterfully portrayed by Jorge Luis Borges in his story 'The Theologians', where two scholars, Aurelian and John of Pannonia, engaged in an intense theological battle. The story culminates with the revelation that both were individualized manifestations of the same Being, a metaphor for the unity in diversity of the human pursuit of knowledge.

§ 18
The Being can be contemplated through meditation. It only requires a closure of the senses. The Tibetan monks advise meditation as the way to achieve happiness, but only spiritual men achieve the contemplation of the Being in their daily lives.

18.1
Personally, I have achieved the gift of feeling what those around me or at a distance feel; an omniscience of senses that is explained by the universal union of Being, perceptible when the ego dissolves through noble feelings such as love and coexistence. The reasons why not all human beings are called to such blessings are explained by the teleology of Being. The Being must experience infinite particularities on its path towards its transuniversal self-consciousness.

§ 19
The Being reveals itself in its true grandeur in meditation. But meditation should not be understood as a monotonous encounter towards knowledge, similar to that of the radical student who goes to university to verify the clichés of his superfluous learning. On the contrary, meditation is overall creativity, imagination and fantasy.

§19.1

Those who free their minds from the jail of the present, will run over the luminous hallways of the Being, where all is possible, where one face follows another, one thought a thought and where love and sadness are seen as faces of the same polyhedron. As we are obliged to survive, we become actors instead of observers.

§19.2
Mediations are but explorations of The Being. They won't alter the sanity of a given Being at all. This is also proven by our sanity as observers before a Theatre play or a film. For the observer, films are illusory contemplations of the Being.

§ 20
The Being is the Observer, and each being is an actor.

§ 21
It is also commonly believed that meditation opens the space of communication between God and men. Meditation is, in fact, the state in which we experience the Being. In our daily life, we are observers of an actor: that individual that we see every day toiling, working, struggling, and, yes, making mistakes. To transcend our Kantian transcendental self to observe ourselves in the universal concert is to achieve nirvana.

§ 22
Observation is the only activity we share with our fellow beings. And for observation, I don't refer to the eye, but to the experience of being there. Any woman knows that the most painful moments in life are those lived without her loved ones. The joy of an actor or a singer is to be observed by many spectators (beings) since acting is for them abandoning the ego to become the Being itself.

§ 22.1

This explains why Stanislavsky was hesitant in his writings about building the character. An actor does not move from his ego to another ego or character, but from his transcendental self to the universal Being and from there to the particular. The great Russian Theatre director pointed out this shift when he insisted that actors should study exhaustively the historical and social milieu not only of the actors they were going to incarnate but also of the playwrights that created them.

§ 22.2

The excellency of actors relies on their ability to transcend not only their egos, but also all the characters they interact with in a Theatre play or film, and from there to spectators of all ages and creeds.

§ 22.3

When we watch a film or a play we act as an audience in the singular: a single word is capable of transmitting a feeling to an ordinary eye. And it is not necessary for someone to explain to us the feelings of a work, whether sadness, indignation or anger, since they are all simultaneously felt by the audience.

§ 22.3.1

The negative Being reproduces such experience through negative feelings such as hate, resentment and envy. In "Crowds and Power" Elias Canetti describes how the powerful manipulate and influence the masses through the use of emotions and feelings. Those in positions of power understand the psychology of crowds and employ various emotional strategies to maintain control. They may use fear, pride, anger, or other strong emotions in their propaganda to sway the collective behaviour of the masses.

§ 23.

In 2195, the world will hear about a man named Ugesh. A lover of Theatre and a scholar of the works of great playwrights, from Aeschylus to Pinter, he will design a hypnotic stage machine that will allow players to virtually embody a specific character. Over time, the game will become more appealing than life itself, offering players the chance to also embody animals, men, or women who have lived in the past, transporting them through time to either survive or live and work in specific dates and places.

The realism will be so impressive that many players will feel, much like Sigismund in Calderón's play upon being crowned king, that they are returning to their primitive lives. They will be so immersed in their virtual activities that they will deny the reality of their past, regarding it simply as a fantasy.

The fear of these players returning to reality will be equivalent to the fear that the current generation feels about death.

§ 23

He looked around and felt that everything was ready for his new role as a jilted lover: the walls marked by the passage of water, the window splattered with white paint, the computer screen playing music videos, the Rosary he had bought her in Paris. and

the cigarette resting in the ashtray. He looked closely at the perfect shape of his hands, letting the light caress his palms, and noticed the scar left by a wound when he was thirteen years old, when he was playing bored in a playground on the outskirts of Bucaramanga. .

The air carried with it fragrances of cardamom and salt, and he wondered about the future sufferings and joys of this character, another role he must play according to the rules of the past, remembering how he had played the role of a loving third-world husband in London, that of a lonely child in Bucaramanga, or that of a pop music dancer during his high school years.

§ 24

The Being with absolute knowledge of itself is God.

§ 25

The Being as God doesn't forget. It's able to remember everything in detail, for He has lived everything created by him.

§ 26

The knowledge of the Being lies hidden in most creatures by the will of the Being. All history lies crusted in every human being by the melted steel of forgetfulness. But the Being allows intuitions and fragments of his knowledge of itself to many beings. All the greatest thinkers, mystics and poets, not to mention the prophets, are manifestations of the Being in its path to knowledge.

§ 27

The Being is an entity that builds knowledge. And as the Messiah that comes into contact with pimps and whores in order to experience the darkest depths of the soul, and in his love ends up giving his life for them, thus the Being, out of his love for knowledge, ends up bearing the joys and pains of all his creatures, bypassing his original nature as creator. For we are all of the same matter that made the God of gods in Israel, the spirit of the mountains over that waters of Niagara falls, the Idol of the tribes of Java and the madman of Guyana. We are God deprived of his own divinity by an act of faith, forgiveness and forgetfulness. This explains why any biopic film or autobiography becomes also the life of viewers and readers.

§ 27.1

Any life we observe becomes ours.

§ 28

Memory, Funes' gift, the character from Borges, is the primary attribute of God. But do not look in that memory for the scope, nor the extent of a single life, nor the history of all men and women written in a book. Instead, imagine it serving as the judge of all creatures, possessing infinite knowledge.

§ 28.1

You, the main character of every story you read or hear, will play in the most convincing way: creating variations of the original mould.

§ 29
Thoughts are given to us.

§ 30
Peirce marvels at the scant probability a man has to get right any theory on the universe. It is by intuition and hazard that all the formulae of physics and mathematics have been discovered. This fact is commonly overlooked, and we are taught to assume that Newton got the law of gravity because an apple fell over his head. It certainly triggered the idea. But as Poe remarked in the prologue of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" thinking is a process conditioned by external stimuli.

§ 31
In one of his visions a young Carl Jung saw ideas as already-built objects shelved in some immaterial archive. Picture such libraries as visited from time to time by students, scholars and thinkers, who in exchange for years of learning get the ideas later to be presented to us as their own.

§ 32
Whoever learns music or a second language, knows that toil alone is not responsible for the learning process. At some point the secrets of the language, its music, its structure, is revealed to the student, who feels as the pilgrim that arrives in a green open valley after months of darkness, stepping over misty abysms on narrow-pass trails.

§ 33
Since the Being exists in all its possible shapes, it should wash itself in the waters of the Stygian river before and after every life, as Er tells us at the end of "The Republic".

§ 34
The last book of Plato's "The Republic" tells the story of a soldier who returned from the dead. During his death, he saw people choosing the life they were going to lead in their next life. Plato assumed that those roles would only be played in the future. Such an assumption preceded the theory of relativity. I infer that those people had to choose from among all the roles in all of human history.

§ 35
In a story of Mandrake he read as a kid, an old woman wanted to get the elixir of youth from his hero, the most famous magician in the world. After cutting short her wicked intentions, and in a compassionate gesture, Mandrake decides to hypnotize the old woman, making her forget her previous years. She now reappears young again, but to her own eyes alone, in the mirror. Forgetfulness is, in fact, the elixir of youth, the gift that allows the mad to go on living in this world of sick sanity.

§ 35.1

Original sin, as it has been interpreted, is an act of forgetting the primordial Being.

§ 36
The Being is the Observer. The Observer is God.

§ 37
God is the entity that knows and remembers everything by first-hand experience. Satan is the consummated Ego, he who can't remember beyond his desires, and who denies the existence and importance of any other players in the game.

§ 38
Each viewer is an observer and as an observer of the Being, the Being becomes the Observer.

§ 39
Satan and God

Satan is God falling
As God is Satan in penitence
They both are,

as any of us,
The Observer
Satan, God

who falls into temptation
Remember Lucifer and Judas
God, Satan

purging away his sins
Paulus, Gregory, Ignatius
Jesus, Buddha, Socrates are manifestations of Being
Hitler, Napoleon, and Macbeth are manifestations of Being

They both are
the main characters
Of all arts
Literature and Film
With many names,
with many actions
With or without
faith
And with you
as Seer

§ 40
The being is the actor

§ 41
Each life bears the Being, therefore each man lives, as manifestations of the Being, all possible lives.

§ 42
Live in the certainty that you will have the choice to play any role amongst all the roles of humanity. In fact, men can choose next to be Adam, or Ruth, or Aeschylus. What universal motivations, though, men will have in order to decide to play Cain, Kafka or Trotsky? What freedom we, the Observer, have, to move from one life to another, as an actor who moves from one role to another.

§ 43
The Being is indivisible.

§ 44
The Being cannot be divided in the same way that you cannot be divided. Even a man with half his brain preserves the essence of the ego, that eye that observes everything with interest, even against the will of its actors.

§ 45
The Being is feeling and as such delights in the intensity of the feelings

§ 46
Consider all the crimes perpetrated by men throughout history. You will find that they were not committed for the sake of gold, or that of reforming an empire, neither by the race against death nor by the perversion of a broken mind; they were injustices committed for the sake of feeling. For the images of prosperity or freedom are nothing without the feelings that create them. And, isn't it common to hear of celebrities who delight in recounting how much they suffered to succeed?

§ 47

The previous certainty will become the main argument against criminality. A normal person will choose to live in the ups and downs of existence within a legal frame. Those willing to experience high rewards will also experience high humiliations, for the Being moves like a rollercoaster over the rails of time. Men, as beings, experience the same movement by their very nature. Nonetheless, since our expectations as Being are clouded by those of society, many men and women live in the belief they are not moving according to their expectations.

§ 48
In reality we are the makers of our own fate. Every fall and every tear, every triumph and every glory have been already designed by the Being. The scholastic discussions on whether reality happens according to the will of God will end by the certainty that God loves every man's fate, be it the one of the martyrs in Navarra, or that of the guards of Leningrad. For the predesigned surprises on the silk route exist to be discovered by the Being, incarnated in new human beings, as a renewed surprise, perfected by the path to Nirvana.

§ 48.1
The myth of the eternal return is also that of the eternal beginning.

§ 49
He forgets his own history and extension in order to become a single being, be it a woman, a dolphin or a plant.

§ 50
Charon's ship sails faster when a Being returns to life.

§ 51
The Being is trapped by the ego in order to become an actor.

§ 52
The closer you are to yourself the closer you are to God.

§ 53
Being God is being close to yourself.

§ 54
For God came to the world and lived as a man as Jesus. And after bearing all the sins of humanity, He understood that none of those he had shared his life with were worthy of the kingdom of Heaven. Peter had denied him, but at least he had defended him, for John, the disciple he loved the most, appeared just before his death. But now, as God, Jesus reveals that such is his love for his fellow men, and such is his understanding of the motives that prompts their evil-doing, that he has decided to spare humanity from all the horrors of Hell and the trials of Heaven. Horrors and trials will remain, however, until the end of History, like amusement parks where all men and women will be able to enter freely.

The happiest entity of the Being is God, for he observes all the possible events in the eternity of History at the same time. Such observation makes possible the variations of history itself, with all its actors and scenarios

§ 55
The task of the Being is endless.

§ 56
The Being rests and works, suffers and has joy. It lacks a beginning and end, for the Being rejects destruction, though in an act of forgetfulness it accepts it as the ultimate end of any Play.

§ 57
The Being is life itself.

§ 58
Life is the most consecrated construction of the Being, is to it what the body is to any man or woman.

§ 59
The Being is one, but it delights in appearing to itself as many.

§ 60
The Being is at every moment, and as such it cannot be measured. At this very moment the Being is yourself, the finest fibre of your--soul that has been there before the creation, and which by an act of forgetfulness, is able to feel joy and pain.

§ 61
Every man and woman experiences the Being for they are the Being. The woman that smiles singing from a TV screen, the child who smiles at you from a portrait, the insect that crosses the air, are all manifestations of the Being.

§ 62
The Being is elusive; it is everything and nothing, as the Upanishads claim.

§ 63
Nothingness as such doesn't exist. It will always require the thinking of the Being, which is never absent. The Being, however, may imagine it, in the same way mathematicians imagine the existence of cero.

§64
The Being as Observer goes beyond any scientific understanding.

§ 65
You will always be: that's all you need to know to go on living.

§ 66
From life to life, you will experience the universe

§ 67
In the gardens of the Oracle of Delphi, we find Hugo Noël, a philosopher by divine will, engaged in a thought-provoking conversation with the revered Socrates.

HUGO: Have you ever had the desire to be someone else?

SÓCRATES: I admit I have.

HUGO: Does it happen when you are moved by an event, that is, the actions of a particular character?

SÓCRATES: Indeed.

HUGO: Now, picture yourself as an actor who has to choose among all the roles of humanity. After death, you will be fascinated by the options you have; there you see the woman who passionately loved her not-so-beloved husband until his death, there's the orphan who achieved fame as a child and suddenly went mad. Here is the king who ruled Europe and Asia with a thousand wives, and over there is the painter who possessed the world.

SÓCRATES: It's nothing more than a pleasant dream.

HUGO: True. But don't you see that life is nothing more than a succession of dreams, many of them realized by sudden circumstances?

SÓCRATES: I admit that desire precedes the goal.

HUGO: The Christians suppose they will be rewarded in heaven for their sufferings. They envision themselves in modern cities, free from all material concerns. But shouldn't we deduce from the greatness of God all the pleasures we will obtain after a laborious life, instead of falling into common representations of happiness?

SÓCRATES: Certainly.

HUGO: Therefore, I would like to ask you, what would be the greatest pleasure for a man or a woman, a pleasure so impossible to attain by our own nature that no living man has mentioned it until now?

SÓCRATES: The greatest pleasure possible in life would be its prolongation: the elixir of eternal youth, so cherished by the knights of the Middle Ages. But as you mentioned an unconsidered pleasure, I am at a loss. Let's see. Since you live in India, and your frame of reference is Christianity, I would say the answer pertains to reincarnation.

HUGO: My understanding of reincarnation deviates from the tenets of Hinduism. But, to return to the object of our inquiry, may I ask if you consider that the greatest pleasure in life will not be experiencing the lives of all the people you have ever admired, and then, even more intriguingly, the lives of the people you also hate or despise? You will be drawn not so much to their daily existence as to the intensity of their feelings.

SÓCRATES: That seems like a heavy burden. Think of the people who have suffered so much that before taking their own lives, they said they would never return to life in any way.

HUGO: This significant objection has an answer. What human experience can these suicide victims have to cure them of their anguish? Is the same cure applied today to people with mental issues?

SÓCRATES: Forgetfulness. And through electric shocks.

HUGO: What we can also define as the extinction of the former self.

SÓCRATES: Indeed, it is thanks to forgetfulness that we leave behind childhood and youth to become men.

HUGO: Now think of forgetfulness after and before death. It is through forgetfulness that each man and woman can leave behind the life they have lived to experience another life.

SÓCRATES: And how many lives must a soul live to contemplate God?

HUGO: An infinite number. But this truth should not surprise you. Thanks to forgetfulness, eternal repetition is, in reality, eternal beginning. Because every man and woman is a manifestation of the same Being.

SÓCRATES: But the Being is indivisible.

HUGO: The scholastics arrived at that conclusion. The entire being can be every creature thanks to forgetfulness. The worm that crawls and the fish that swims under the sea are the same Being without recollection of their simultaneous, previous, or future manifestations.

SÓCRATES: Are you suggesting, Hugo, that the being simultaneously interprets all the characters on this stage that Shakespeare called the world?

HUGO: Haven't you seen actors willing to play all the characters in a play? If such is the desire of a good actor, what would be the desire of the Being, which finds pleasure in the experiences of living?

§ 68
To be happy is not a state of mind, but a state of perception.

§ 69
Music was correctly understood by the German idealists as a pure form of intuition. But it's not music, but dance, which allows each of us to grasp the immaterial universe. The barriers of the ego crumble before the movements of the soul, and the individual will be melted with that of the artists and of those that observe them. All we want is happiness and knowledge. So dance, my dear reader. Dance! Dance taking others' hands! All the secrets of the universe will come to you. Allow your feelings burst, like champagne, over the stagnant waters of today.

§ 70
Children are very prompt to dance. This is one of the very few skills the Being keeps in a new-born being. For even if any baby lacks memory of his previous and future manifestations as Being, he keeps the intuition of being The Being.

§ 70.1
Why do we dance? Life is movement, encouraged by the search for happiness. Music, the correspondence of immaterial joy, reproduces the movements involved in its creation. The listener who opens his soul is able then to possess not only the core of that joy, but also all the rhythm and movements that made it possible. They are, in fact, its

history. The desire a dancer has to invite others in his dance is akin to the desire of the Being to share his feelings with all new possible creatures in the universe.

§ 71
Artists should be called dancers, for they create gracefully, as music moves the Being.

§ 72
The secrets of a happy life can be found in the laws of acting. The best actors are those able to listen to the other. For it is in the smiles, doubts and joys of others that we'll find our own face. Feelings are the true creators and destructors. Those able to perceive them in their true intensity, spinning around their ears and bodies, are the messengers of the soul. They are artists.

§ 73
The Play of Being is life as we perceive it.

§ 74
We are all actors of a play as Shakespeare correctly understood. But whereas this concept has been mostly accepted as a pretty literary metaphor, it conceals a metaphysical view of our lives, which only the enlightened are able to grasp.

§ 75
In Homo Ludens, his most beautiful book, John Huizinga describes the importance of play in human life. We should go a step further to affirm that the only purpose of living is playing, not for the sake of acting alone, but mainly for the pleasure of observing.

§ 76
The Observer is like a gaze flying overall. Music, literature, the plastic arts, and finally drama, have been arts that transmit that immaterial gaze. From the arts we obtain the intuition of divinity, as in a dream. Because dreams are themselves dramatic sequences to which we, as actors, give meaning.

§ 77
We live in the era of the Actors. The impulse of fiction has become so close to reality that it's difficult to say whether films are indeed about reality or if reality itself exists to serve the interests of the moviemakers. The rise of the actor as a politician can be explained by our propensity towards drama.

§ 78
As actors on the stage of life, we all live with the fear and anticipation of conflict, because one of the most exciting and pleasurable experiences in life is overcoming obstacles. Danger must exist for salvation to shine; evil must exist for good and justice to radiate brightly. In the end, knowledge and evil will be crushed by the power of love and by the revelation of the purpose behind their existence. Then, history will progress to a higher dimension.

§79
We are all called to act as protagonists in the world.

§ 80
What the other is you are, you were, or you are going to be. That which is across your eyes is your own being under a different manifestation.

§ 81
God is the Observer and Lucifer is the Actor, or, as William Blake wrote:

Good is the passive that obeys Reason
Evil is the active springing from Energy.

§ 81.1
But the Observer is in the Actor, for the Actor is also the Observer. They both are mere manifestations of the same Being. Me, as a writer, and you, as a reader have been the Being under different skin. When you think about the elements and events that have made your life you will discover that feelings are what is left of you. You were sad, very sad, and happy, very happy; you were in despair, you were in glory. But we should understand that the entity that feels is the same entity in every single being. We don't need to explain happiness or hate to someone who observes us shouting, for we know everybody else has experienced happiness and hate.

§ 82
See yourself as the actor in a film watched by the universe. You are given a role; in fact, you have chosen it, and

you are eager to perform it. Just before coming onto the stage, you realize you are about to be excluded from the place where all feelings and memories are perfect, you realize you are fated to forget everything you have lived and experienced in other lives, the lives of all humanity, all animals and stones. You cry, but you know that's also part of the game. Then you are born, and then you live. And you act according to certain rules, always performing according to your own will. You know you can break the rules at any moment, but by doing it you would end the game, and you will just feel there is something else to be done.

§ 82.1
Time is not a line from which you are irremediably excluded. You can always return to live that very life--just as now you think it should have been lived.

§ 83
God and Satan are correspondences of the same feeling. The one is anguish, pain, bad, wrath, arrogance and violence, moving in a different direction than love, justice, beauty, goodness and peace. The infinite move of the heart towards the bad feelings is called Satan; towards the good ones, God.

§ 84
The actor is the closest spectator to his role.

§ 85
Every tear, every struggle, every fall and rise, and every scorn, vengeance or cruelty, they all await for you in the steps of eternity.

§ 86
We have a body, but the soul is common to all of us. There is only one seer before an infinite number of actors. As in a movie. You see many scenes, all different from one another.

§ 87
Sade's priest approached a metaphysical certainty when he affirmed that in order to practice virtue is necessary to experience vice. The Being recognizes the ascendancy of Virtue and knowledge, but it also knows that they don't exist alone. To inhale you have to exhale. This back and forth allows him to breathe, to show his strength, and eventually to win. Now consider the opponent of happiness, the very aim of the Being. Don't you see pain, excess, cruelty, anguish, and destruction? As observers, we are also the beings that, as actors, we hate.

§ 88
Recollect the memories of your life and you will find a tremendous stream of feelings. Instead of repressing them, as you are used to in order to preserve your sanity, allow them to flow. Now, think at your disposal of all the experiences of other's lives and you will find yourself immersed in a sea of passions. At some point, as it happens with all memories, you realize you are the main character of every life you heard about, every

drama you read about or every character you deal with along your life. Since we are prompted by nature to share our experiences with others, you'll feel the need to communicate your feelings, but then, to your surprise, you will discover that there is no need to speak, for all we share the same heart. The heart of God and the heart of the man that looks to you around the corner are all and the same.

§ 89. The Observer
As a seer you think you are always the same. But you know the other's hopes and pains are but branches of the same stock. In fact, they both are equal.

§ 90
What he feels, I have felt it. What she enjoys I have enjoyed too. Life is but a succession of feelings. If you have always had and will always have a feeling, what would you complain about?

§ 91
Happiness and joy are both necessary for the final judgment, that's to say, for the watching of the great film of eternity. Imagine yourself watching the best movies all your life for eternity. Now imagine yourself inside the movie, in the most realistic environment. The observer or the Seer, sees everything, for we are the Seer, and nothing will be able to exist without us.

§ 92
Art is the experience that reveals to us the pleasures of observing. For one hour or two, watching a film or a Theatre play, I stop acting in the world in order to become a pure observer. The pleasure we get in sharing a film with a beloved one is no other than the pleasure of feeling we are one and the same. As observers our minds behave as one for one hour or two.

§ 93
As a writer I enjoy a double privilege: as a creator I'm the first-hand observer of the characters or ideas I write about, and as such I'm actor and observer. But the rules of creation are very demanding, and even a verse requires inspiration, knowledge and experience.

§ 93.1
As a reader I will repeat the experience of creation without the responsibilities involved. Writing is an act of representation. In the same way the Being falls into forgetfulness to allow itself to become a given character in the arena of the world, writers concentrate on a given scenario, regardless of their personal existence. Art, a correspondence of creation itself, allows the Being to exist, to act and to observe itself under new circumstances.

§ 94
Actors are our true friends. We talk to them every day, and they are not only spiritual, but also beautiful and loyal.

§ 95
I feel the acting spirituality because of the intensity of the actors' emotions. We really share the anger of Othello, the evilness of Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter, the madness of Heath Ledger as the Joker. These feelings we have had, sure, but only an actor can who us the universality of such feelings.

§ 96
As we may expect from a true friend, actors never hide secrets to us. We can see them crying, making love and even talking to themselves. In the same vein, we also feel that everyone is watching us (of the importance of this feeling, we'll see further later on, when I describe the final metaphysical true).

§ 96.1
An actor is our best playmate.

§ 97
Actors are happy to be identified as players. They play the world with a rhythm and intensity that raises the suspicions of the layman. But this is a play within another play. All men and women, even celebrities, live as real actors. The Being assumes the task of surviving according to a series of rules. The game is mortal from the beginning, and it's regulated by the same being that plays the parts.

§ 98
We can see them rise to power, conquer nations, and murder their enemies, but we also see them fall with their broken hearts. They may kill us by killing the character with whom we identify, and so we kill them too, but in the end, all we know is that this killing is not real. It's just a catharsis or an act of faith.

§ 99
Actors are the real priests of the world. As such they suffered so much poverty and humiliation before the discovery of film. Then their moment came and they became the idols of the crowd. Our admiration is based on the love we personally profess for them, for they have allowed themselves to play with skill the most difficult parts in that earthly game we call Theatre or film. They are also privileged men, for they share the certainties of being in creation, the eternal admiration of the Being, and the eternal worship of themselves as Beings.

§ 100
L'Amour fou, that's so say the love people have for their most ferocious murderers: We know they will inspire the most daring film characters.

§ 100.1
When I refer to cinema I am not referring to commercial cinema (although they can also be a theme of it), but, in an ontological way, to the films that each being stars in, and that encompass all of life within the Film of the universe that unfolds towards eternity.

§ 100.2
When we watch a movie, we are in fact, talking to each character; we allow our will to be influenced by any sudden thought. The thoughts and feelings of a given screenwriter are, once embodied in an actor, transmitted to us. We become not only the listeners of every conversation, but also the spokesmen. This illusion is possible by the very act of understanding, the hermeneutic circle. The instant between listening to a voice and understanding it is identical to that of begetting a thought and uttering it. The direction of the speech thus bounces back continuously to the act of listening--though the listener lives in the illusion of being both speaking and listening.

§ 102
Our individuality resides in our senses, with the primary one being the eye, and the world is our stage. Therefore, no individual can see the Being directly, just as you cannot see your own eyes directly but through their reflection.

§ 102
Dante revealed to the world the afterlife of many members of his generation. The souls condemned in infernal circles suffer for believing themselves eternally there, but the poet demonstrates with his journey that the destiny of each Being will ascend that spiral until it reaches God. The movement of Being goes from happiness to sadness and from wealth to poverty, but also from anguish and despair to happiness and joy.

§ 103
The fate of every human being is to realize that he is just an actor

§ 104
Artists are, as Aristotle remarked, possessed by God. They are the Observer at the moment of creation, and the Observer in the act of contemplation. They understand--as everybody else through the contemplation of their work, that all men are stock from the same entity. And as the writer of the Poem of Gilgamesh, as the singer of Hawaii, they understand that all fatigue is temporary and that they will have their own harvest time, where somewhere over the rainbow all of your dreams come true. This process is akin to that of a sportsman who trains day and night, or of a writer who sacrifices his youth in the interest of knowledge. Their fatigues are compensated by their incoming victories.

§ 105
Regardless of his role, any actor will become the Observer
We don't live in the certainty of material objects that disintegrate before our senses. We just live.

§ 106. Eternity is living.
All animals understand the meaning of eternity, a concept that Western philosophy hasn't been able to cope with.

§ 107
In the end, we are all and as such we will have to live in all.

§ 108
We don't feel in words.

§ 108.1
Words are merely instruments at the service of the intellect's wishes. But even the intellect, nourished by the Being, will arrive to the same truths we grasp immediately through feeling.

§ 109
Unless we are saints or children, life after death is not heaven or paradise, but a limbo. In it the Being is not yet exposed to oblivion. The ego remains, oscillating between being and not being. Whoever decides to go on being the same will know hell, or a society where the ego perpetuates its desires, including that of the illusion of mortality; Whoever abandons the ego will merge into Being, that is, into God.

§ 110
The Eye or perception is feeling itself.

§ 111
Happiness has always been at hand of all human beings. It will suffice to realize that one's life is but the most elaborated performance, in order to achieve peace of mind. I have problems right now, or so I believe. But, do I really have problems? One thing is Hugo Santander, that character I see moving in the turbulent streams of life, and another is I in the act of contemplating him. I'm both in fact: body as Hugo Santander and soul as

the Observer. But whereas I see my I bearing pain and oppressive circumstances--without which my life won't be as interesting as all lives are fated to be, the second one is just delighted in the act of observing. Any human being may endure sickness, prison, loneliness and death, but still he will be always participating in the Vision, or the pleasure of contemplating the unfolding of a given life.

§ 111.1
Those who claim that life is more interesting than any novel are partly right, since we are called to act in a certain role, but they are wrong when they assume that the lives of others are not equally interesting.

§ 111.2
Reading, in fact, is getting closer to the Being through knowledge.

§ 112
God, or the supreme idea of goodness, loves us all, for he has known all the horrors of creation. That's also why he had to embody the fate of Jesus Christ. By being the purest man on earth he had to see the glorious outcome of his way of living, that's to say, of serving others. God indeed loves us for he sees our endeavours on earth, giving life to other actors. But God has also determined to suffer the abyss of heartbreak, like Jesus the night before his martyrdom.

§ 113
In Western countries we are taught to admire people willing to succeed. Such admiration conveys the bitter taste of segregation, for those who fail in their endeavours, are shoved off as useless. In India people just admire people willing to live. In Western countries they ask us about our health or mood. In India they simply ask you if you have eaten.

§ 114
Your fate will be your choice amongst all possible fates. Between all destinations, yours.

§ 114.1
But you will also be the one beyond. You will be all and all that you have been, and all you haven't been. This concept, once proved, will change the world.

§ 114.2
By oblivion after death you will be baptized in fire. Everything that has not been will be past, present and future. And then, with the desire to be what you have never been, you will be reborn, completely forgotten, purified, renewed.

§ 115
It is forgetfulness that allows certain pleasures in life that we conceived ephemeral: the first time we are moved by a face, a movie we liked, the greeting to an old

acquaintance without the burdensome weight of an offense committed. Picture now forgetfulness after the final judgment.

§ 116

In the afterlife memory is gradually recovered. For the description of afterlife I refer the reader to the writings of seers as Böhme and Swedenborg. Any apparent incompatibility between their writings and mine should be overlooked. The nature of our inquiry obliges us to create castles of thought according to each generation’s beliefs.

§ 117

All your secrets and those of others will be revealed. There will be light and you will be able to see God. He, the Being and you, for being and the Being are also God.

§ 118

Hell also exists within each being. We can experience it by thinking of ourselves trapped forever in a painful place.

§ 118.1

There is a fascinating correspondence between Dante's "Comedy" and Samuel Beckett's trilogy of novels. While the Florentine poet lived in a time of hope and belief that allowed him to ascend from the infernal circles to the contemplations of eternal life, which, as Schopenhauer pointed out, could be both pleasurable and tedious, the Irish poet of the absurd also constructed a similar framework, with the same Being at its beginning and end, throughout his trilogy of novels in French.

In "Molloy," we find a kind of representation of Paradise, with a beggar who does not suffer from hunger or material needs but is trapped in deplorable monotony. This reminds us of what Miguel de Unamuno wrote in "The Tragic Sense of Life," where he suggested the idea that even angels in heaven might grow tired and descend to hell.

"Malone Dies" resembles purgatory, with a group of beggars confined to a sanatorium where all their needs are met, except for freedom.

In "The Unnamable," Beckett explores the terrifying depths of immobility and powerlessness. Like many of Dante's condemned souls, The Unnamable cannot escape or even make choices about his fate, as he lacks limbs and is blind, mute, and deaf.

Such powerlessness, which turned Helen Keller into a celebrated writer, philanthropist, and mystic, was later presented by Beckett as subject to our will. In the second act of "Waiting for Godot," Pozzo frantically cries out to Vladimir and Estragon for help as he has fallen to the ground with his servant Lucky and cannot get up. Both beggars come to his aid after long hesitations but end up immobilized on the ground as well, until Vladimir wonders if it might be better to stand up. "Where there's a will, there's a way" is their victorious chant when they finally manage to stand up.

§ 119

The Being has infinity at its disposal to live in all possible hells and heavens, all combinations of peoples and eras. A being that thinks of the possibility of gathering together Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Jesus, Verlaine, Borges, and the Bronte sisters will be able to perform the task.

§ 120

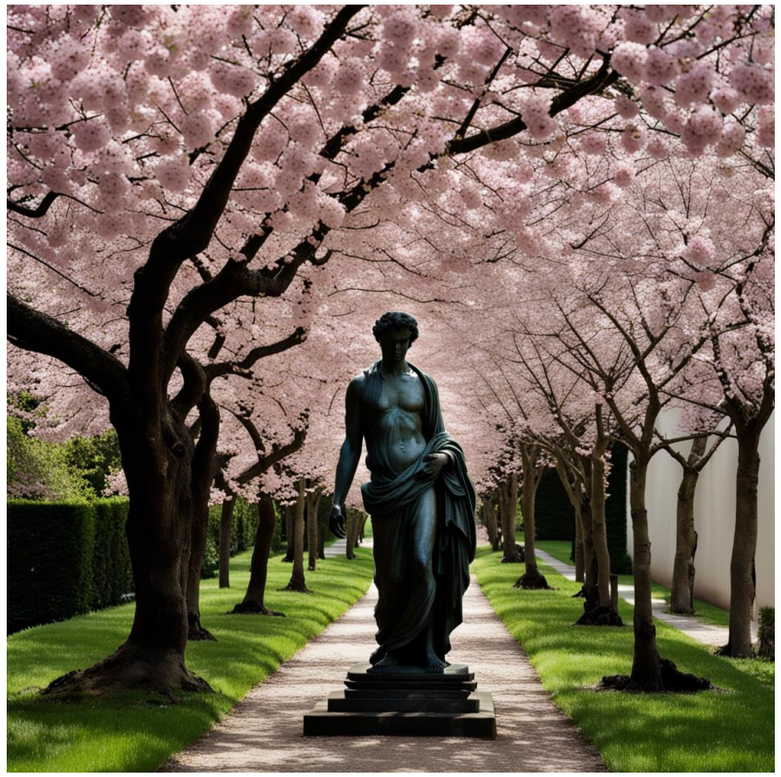
In meditation, you stop being an actor to become The Being that observes your own life and everything.

§ 121

There is anxiety because there is no forgetting.

§ 122

Each person follows their destiny. It is your life that matters to the universe, not the triumph or defeat, but the feelings that both illusions inspire in you.



§ 123

Reincarnation must be understood not as a movement from one ego to another ego, but as a shift of the Being to one of the forms that it itself constructs in its becoming.

§ 123.2

Those who remember their past lives do so because their destiny includes the revelation of memories of those lives, usually to convey mystical or transcultural

messages. Here, a Hindu girl remembers having lived in the body of a woman from another city in India, reaffirming the beliefs of an entire nation in reincarnation. There, an English girl recognizes in the relics of Ancient Egypt exhibited in the British Museum that she was a priestess in an Egyptian temple, reviving the interest of English universities in the archaeology, culture, and religion of ancient Egypt.

§ 123.3

Love is also a path of interconnection between the manifestations of the Being. Suffice it to say that my passion for reading led me to love the Greek, Latin, French, English, Portuguese, Tamil, Kyrgyz, German, and Russian cultures so much that when I learned their languages, it felt like I was not memorizing but recognizing their expressions and words.

§ 123.4

Mystics are capable of recognizing themselves in multiple existences. When Jesus said that he and the Father were one, he expressed that his knowledge and memory of the manifestations of the Being were manifold and infinite.

§ 123.5

Those who deny reincarnation and the immortality of the Being do not understand that their own existences are manifestations of a single energy in the universe.

§ 124

What you refused, what you hated, what you've disowned, so are you. And all you've admired you will be, because the Being lives to be happy and to also be experiencing the suffering. But, how can you enjoy happiness without suffering?

§ 125

Being is like a roller coaster, which requires ups and downs.

These are trials which will then be compensated, and that comes from the full knowledge of God, expressing itself in compassion, forgiveness, humility and all the feelings that, as the Thai-chi prescribes, bend violence and force.

§ 126

By creating the universe, God forsakes forgetfulness to recognize Himself in His most exalted state, that of wisdom expressed in the architecture of the universe and life itself. We, who dwell in the limbo of individuality, experience this wisdom, albeit not yet permanently. Saints or Buddhas who attain Nirvana are the exception to this rule.

§ 127

Women are practical by nature and instinctively build a stable world for their children. They are more poised than bellicose men. They are also dreamers by nature. They adapt reality to their dream role as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters or professionals.

§ 128

Each fate has its own beauty, which makes it valuable to humanity as a whole. Human beings must adhere to the rules of the game they choose, which urges us to be pragmatic in our daily lives. At the same time, we must appreciate the happiness of the future roles that we envision today as observers.

§ 129

The Colombian generation that adapted the phrase “you are making a movie in your head” to refer to someone who did not understand what really happened, clung to an ontological truth.

§ 129.1

Man's greatest pleasure does not buy happiness, but rather seeing his own life as a movie. We continually reconstruct our history according to clearly present scenes. We dwell in the past as memory or in the future as hope or despair.

§130

Those who do not want to live are like actors who prefer to leave acting to dedicate themselves to another unattainable profession. Their discomfort with their lives is caused by illness or impotence, calamities that are certainly not easy to face, and that require a temperance that only saints like Saint Therese of Lisieux achieve.

§ 131

Suicide is also a plausible ending for each story. Many times the actor immerses himself in a feeling of frustration; The validity of this decision will be examined in eternity, since we are not always actors, but we will always and inevitably be observers.

§ 132

Drugs and alcohol narrow the distance between being an observer and being an actor. The danger is to drown in observation when you need to be an actor. Many succumb and fall into the abysses of social contempt.

§ 133

Why do we find fictional characters like Hamlet, Don Quixote, and Estragon more real than those we know? Because Being is incarnated not in material beings, but in existences before which we are nothing more than observers.

That's the power of telling stories. We experience the Being of its protagonists, even if our ego indicates that they never existed.

This is another argument that demonstrates the existence of God, and that theologians have barely developed. It is enough to read The Bible or The Quran, or listen to Bach to be convinced of the existence of God.

§ 134

A video game is also a film that forces us to confront various tests according to pre-established rules, on a scenario in which we must remain attentive, taking care not to make a mistake that could force us to abandon the company.

§ 135

Consider, for example, the scenario I had today: a guard knocks on my door and asks me to lend him a small amount of money. I could give you a negative, but I live in India, where the law is lax, and from past experiences, I understand that it is better to meet their demands. I give him some money while expressing disappointment on my face. This is how I have survived the possibility of thieves entering my house “by accident”. Secondly, my annoyed expression at the end of this scene told him that he won't be welcome from now on. Of course, breaking the rules of our complex social life brings difficulties.

§ 136

Nightmares can turn into pleasant dreams, in the same way that the difficulties in our lives can turn into solutions.

§ 137

Ancient writings show that fortune always accompanies those who do good, and that it is contrary to those who intrigue and deceive. But who reads ancient writings today? Furthermore, who believes in its precepts in a world that preaches scepticism towards what is not scientifically demonstrable?

§ 138

In dreams only Being exists, and we are all one in the uncertainty of sleep. As Aristotle points out, citing another author before him, half of our lives merge into the equality of sleep.

§ 138.1

Some will object that only a third, but isn't Theatre and cinema, not to mention reading, sports and meditation, also a common dream? Even routine work can become an activity in which the individual stops being as an individual to inhabit the castles of Being.

§ 139

Those of us who choose to walk the tightrope of our inner vocation, that of the Nietzschean superman, know that heaven and hell intersect their paths, because there is no other difference between happiness and unhappiness, virtue and pleasure, friend and enemy, than our inner perception. Like the saints and Sufis, I can suffer the scourge, humiliation and lies of others if I firmly believe that time will do me justice.

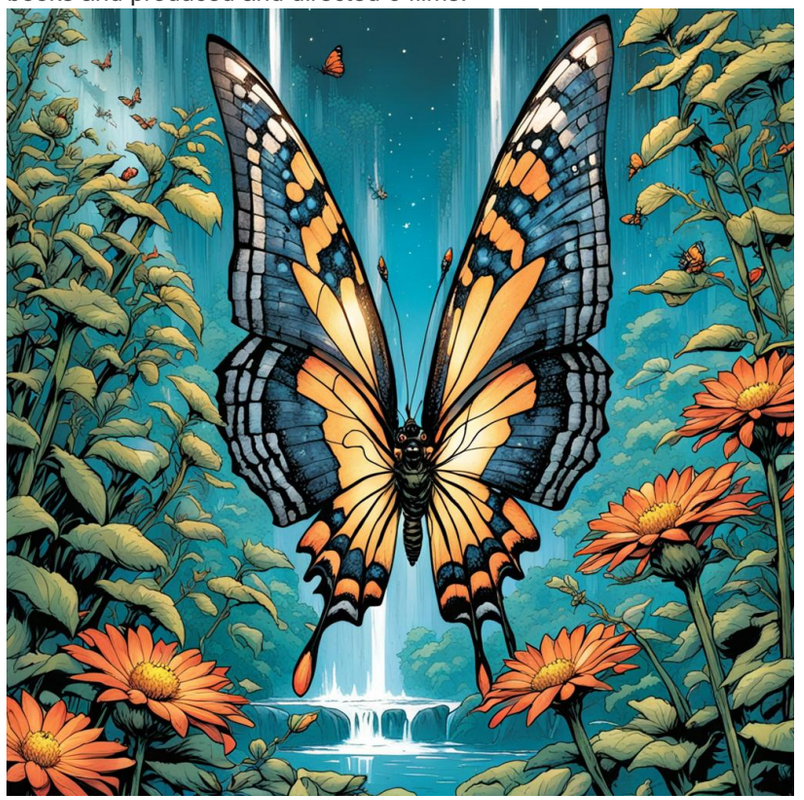
§ 140

Van Gogh was right when he wrote that he was more interested in ugly women than beautiful ones, because they had suffered. The beauty of the body pales before the beauty of a soul tempered in the crucible of injustice and contempt.

§ 141

In my particular case, today, at 54 years old, I can affirm that I have obtained the grace of God: excellent health, a prodigious memory, a reason that unravels the most

obtuse problems, and exceptional circumstances that have allowed me to travel and work in 11 cities from nine nations. With a small budget I have written and self-published 50 books and produced and directed 6 films.



The causes of such extraordinary fortune lie in my stoicism in the face of persecution and discrimination received from university faculties in which I refused to be an accomplice in lies, injustices and collusion.

The study of ethics allows us to endure evil as Marcus Aurelius prescribed in his Meditations; Responding to intrigue with intrigue, to lies with lies, and to violence with violence, in the false belief that benefits will be obtained, is typical of ignorance.

I look at my opponents today and discover without surprise that several of them have died; others live opulently, but ill; Others clung to their positions, enduring remorse for the suicide of a fragile student who they persecuted mercilessly in the same way they once did with me.

§ 142

The most admirable aspect of our idea of God or the supreme good is that it is malleable, just as all supreme love becomes. It's the love of a father or a mother; people see it and feel it every day. Its most immediate correspondence can be sensed in the generosity of water and air, which lack form and adapt to all living beings, as Saint Francis of Assisi sang in his “Cantico delle creature”:

Lauded be Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures here,

Especially the brother Sun, who is the day's bright seer.
He is fair and radiant with splendid light unfurled,
From Thee, O Most High, he bears your significance.

Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for sister Moon on high,
And for the stars in heaven, Thou formed with artful eye.
Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for brother Wind so free,
For air and clouds, and their nourishing weather.

For by them, to all creatures, Thou dost provide,
Sustenance and life's gifts, in Thee they all confide.
Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for sister Water's grace,
So useful, humble, precious, and pure in her embrace.

Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for brother Fire's bright might,
For he illuminates the night, with beauty and with light.
Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for mother Earth below,
Who nourishes and guides us, in her many colours show.

Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for those who forgive with love,
And those who endure sickness, tribulation from above.
Blessed are they who seek peace in every stride,
For from Thee, Most High, they shall not be denied.

Lauded be Thee, my Lord, for sister death so near,
To whom all living creatures must in due time appear.
Woe to those who depart in mortal sin's dire blight,
But blessed are they who follow Thy will's guiding light.

§ 143
God or the Supreme Good is also the perfection that allows every being to exist. It is the one that allows us to be. In prosaic terms, it is the consciousness of each one's ideal good, their anthropological horizon, their teleology.

§ 144
The misunderstanding of the supreme ideal of Being is often a misunderstanding of moral coordinates.

§ 144.1
To be libertine or to suffer from gluttony, vanity, envy, or pride is a capital sin, not mortal; in 21st-century language, it is a weakness, not a crime.

§ 144.1.1
Playwrights and novelists of the 19th and 20th centuries were the ones who exposed the puritanical absurdities that in the 17th century led adulterers to the stake and

in the 19th century led Oscar Wilde to imprisonment and exile. Works like Ibsen's "A Doll's House" and Bernard Shaw's "Mrs. Warren's Profession" supported reforms for women's equality before the law, while Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" exposed the anti-communist terror imposed by Senator McCarthy in the USA of the 1950s.

§ 144.2
There are both virtuous and wicked individuals in all the subworlds that populate this world; in the Roman clergy as well as in hedonistic circles, in the New York underworld as well as in French politics, in Olympic sports as well as in the board of every residential complex.

§ 145
God is reached through honesty in daily actions, not through puritanical credentials that still swim like piranhas in the currents of modernity.

Ontology of Suicide

Socrates, Seneca, Shakespeare, Hume, Albert Camus, Sylvia Plath and Jorge Luis Borges all prescribed that our freedom allows us to leave this universe when we feel overwhelmed by y a broken illusion, whether it be a burdensome financial debt, a snubbed love, slavery or illness.

Cioran boasts in his writings of living with the daily thought of committing suicide; His aphorism manifests the freedom inherent to those who feel detachment from existence, or simply live without fear of death.

Doubt in Hamlet

In today's world, where young people seek their identity amidst a manipulated protesting mass led by a demagogue or within ideologies promising to define their sensibility, Hamlet continues to assert the right to independence, uniqueness, freedom, rebellion, and above all, the will to exist during the adolescence of all men and women. After the tragedies that atoned for the hubris of Greek families, the ethnic amalgamation

that constituted the Roman Empire, and the brotherhood of the medieval church, Shakespeare and Cervantes formalized individuality in literature.

Ontology of Sincerity

When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern approach Hamlet to inquire about the cause of his melancholy, the Prince rebukes them for wanting to pluck out the heart of his mystery.

HAMLET
Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You
would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would
pluck out the heart of my mystery.

Hamlet is the prince who refuses to act like one. Like Saint Thomas, he knows that humans possess all talents, and his greatest frustration lies in discovering in his beloved Ophelia and in his potential father-in-law Polonius the characteristics typical of worldly men and women: cautious in speech, flatterers, accommodating, opportunistic, seemingly patient, and content.

While university education is, above all, an education in the art of hypocrisy or, as Rochefoucauld would put it, in the art of confining one's disquiet within the heart[24], Hamlet chooses, by contrast, madness and, through it, the unmasking not only of the pretence of his contemporaries but also of his own frivolity. In the dialogue he maintains with his old school friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet torments the audience with his frankness about his melancholy and his contempt for those who, like the majority, practice the art of lying.

HAMLET
Anything but to th' purpose. You were sent
for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks
which your modesties have not craft enough to
color. I know the good king and queen have sent for
you.

ROSENCRANTZ
To what end, my lord?

HAMLET
That you must teach me. But let me conjure
you by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy
of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved
love, and by what more dear a better
proposer can charge you withal: be even and direct

[24] "La constance des sages n'est que l'art de renfermer leur agitation dans le cœur". La Rochefoucault, Maximes, 20.

with me whether you were sent for or no.

ROSENCRANTZ, to Guildenstern
What say you?

HAMLET, aside
Nay, then, I have an eye of you.—If
you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN
My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET
I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation
prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the
King and Queen molt no feather. I have of late, but
wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all
custom of exercises, and, indeed, it goes so heavily
with my disposition that this goodly frame, the
Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most
excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging
firmament, this majestical roof, fretted
with golden fire—why, it appeareth nothing to me
but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.
What a piece of work is a man, how noble in
reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving
how express and admirable; in action how like
an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the
beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and
yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man
delights not me.

The eulogy to humanity is refuted by Hamlet himself when contextualized under the anvil of reason:

What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event
(A thought which, quartered, hath but one part
wisdom And ever three parts coward), I do not know.

These dilemmas arise throughout Shakespeare's play and reflect the variations we experience in our lives on essential topics such as what we are, what we should be, what we should believe, the reason for our existence, and more.

Ontology of the paranormal

The presence of the ghost, far from being a dramatic device, confronts readers and viewers with the invisible and immaterial world. Even before the ghost's appearance, Hamlet was already reflecting on God, angels, demons, hell, limbo, paradise, and the possibility of immortality.

In contrast to the heroes of Spanish sacramental plays, Hamlet is not a devout believer. Like Kant, he acknowledges his incapacity to prove or refute the transcendental, the thing in itself. However, everything changes when, confirming the suspicions expressed by Hamlet at the beginning of the play about the illicit relationship between his mother and his uncle, the ghost of his father appears to him. The scene in which King Hamlet cries out for revenge is the epiphany that shapes Hamlet's destiny:

HAMLET
Oh, my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST
Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts—
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.
O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine.
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So, lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.
But soft, methinks I scent the morning air.
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
With juice of cursèd hebona in a vial
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leprous distilment, whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man

That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body,
And with a sudden vigor it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine,
And a most instant tetter barked about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,
Cut off, even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,
No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.
O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!"

Engaging in a dialogue with ghosts does not necessarily imply belief in them. Prince Hamlet reflects almost immediately on the supernatural nature of this appearance. Like Buñuel, Hamlet does not get entangled in debates about the paranormal; rather, he acknowledges the existence of the ghost he converses with and treats it with the same caution as the living.

GHOST
I am thy father's spirit,

Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their
spheres,
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand an end,
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

Educated in the Bible and classical Greek and Roman literature, Hamlet questions his father's intentions for revenge, especially when the ghost itself, in his view, endures the torments of limbo. His doubts provoke in the sensitive Hamlet questions about the true nature of the apparition, even leading him to question if he has made a pact with a demon assuming the form of a deceased person:

The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me.

Today, it has been presumed that these verses from Hamlet refer to the curse directed at Claudius, although they could also be understood as the resentment or desire for revenge of his father. Such ambiguity is never accidental in great poets.

The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite
That ever I was born to set it right!

Based on the traditional interpretation of these verses, Goethe characterizes Hamlet as "hesitant" ("schwankend"), due to his indecision and internal conflict between two worlds, which prevents him from seeking revenge and carrying out the murder of his stepfather.

"Shakespeare, in this case, wanted to portray the effects of a great action on a soul that is not prepared to carry it out (...) A charming, pure, and highly moral nature, but lacking the nerve strength that makes a hero, sinks under a burden it cannot bear or cast off. All duties are sacred to him; the present is too overwhelming. The impossible was demanded of him, not impossible in itself, but

impossible for him. He twists and torments himself, advances and retreats; he is constantly lost in his thoughts, absorbed in his thoughts; finally, his goal almost escapes his mind, without, however, regaining his inner peace[25]."

Goethe does not write without acuity. Hamlet finds his first opportunity to avenge the ghost when he discovers Claudius alone in the chapel praying and considers the possibility of staining the altar with blood. However, in the England of Saint Thomas Becket, this would be considered desecration. Although Hamlet is determined at first, he hesitates when he thinks about the blessing it would give to his fratricidal uncle.

HAMLET
Now might I do it pat, now he is a-praying,
And now I'll do 't. He draws his sword.
And so he goes to heaven,
And so am I revenged. That would be scanned:
A villain kills my father, and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.

It could be argued that Hamlet's character is not wavering but transcendentally cautious, as demonstrated by Hamlet's boldness in fatally wounding Polonius, whom he mistakes for Claudius in the royal chamber.

POLONIUS (behind the arras)
What ho! Help!

HAMLET
Who's there? A rat?

Hamlet kills Polonius by thrusting a rapier through the arras.

HAMLET (continuing)
Dead! For a ducat!

POLONIUS
Oh, I am slain!

[25] Goethe, J. W. (2007). "In diesen Worten liegt, so glaube ich, der Schlüssel zu Hamlets ganzem Vorgehen. Für mich ist es klar, dass Shakespeare in diesem Fall die Auswirkungen einer großen Handlung auf eine Seele darstellen wollte, die für die Ausführung dieser Handlung ungeeignet ist. . . . Eine liebliche, reine, edle und höchst moralische Natur, ohne die Nervenstärke, die einen Helden ausmacht, sinkt unter einer Last, die sie nicht tragen kann und nicht ablegen darf. Alle Pflichten sind ihm heilig: die Gegenwart ist zu schwer. Unmögliches wurde ihm abverlangt - nicht an sich unmöglich, aber für ihn unmöglich. Er windet und wendet sich, quält sich; er schreitet voran und schreckt zurück; er wird immer in Gedanken versetzt, versetzt sich selbst in Gedanken; endlich verliert er fast sein Ziel aus den Gedanken, ohne jedoch seinen Seelenfrieden wiederzuerlangen." *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Aegypan, 234.

GERTRUDE
Oh, God! What have you done?

HAMLET (continuing)
Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

Hamlet murders Polonius but is immediately filled with remorse. Later, he torments himself for having triggered Ophelia's madness as a result of his actions. This sense of guilt leads him to reproach himself and seek forgiveness from Laertes in the prelude to the final scene. His lyrical and compassionate nature increasingly distances him from violence. In fact, in one of his most touching soliloquies, Hamlet tells Horatio not to fear death, even in the midst of an imminent ambush.

HAMLET
We defy augury. There is a
special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be
now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be
now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The
readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves
knows, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.

Ontology of nihilism

The sensitivity of a man from the era of great military strategists is challenged today by Shakespeare himself, who is closer to our global age. Goethe, like Gabriel García Márquez, admired dominant and conquering personalities such as Napoleon, who destroyed his world in pursuit of fleeting power. "Voilà un homme" ("Here is a man") was the admiring welcome Goethe gave to the French Emperor after he had massacred his compatriots. If most modern leaders were like Napoleon or Fidel Castro, the world would have already erupted in a nuclear cataclysm. On the other hand, Hamlet's character is more universal: "charming, pure, noble, and, above all, of moral nature," in Goethe's own words. His insights were already contrasted by Oscar Wilde in "The Decay of Lying":

"Schopenhauer has analysed the pessimism that characterizes modern thought, but Hamlet invented it. The world has become sad because a puppet once was melancholy. The nihilist, that strange martyr who has no faith, who goes to the stake without enthusiasm, and dies for what he does not believe in, is a purely literary product[26]."

In reality, Hamlet does not commit a second murder. As I demonstrated in my adaptation of Shakespeare's work to the film "Hamlet Unbound" (2012), Claudius commits suicide out of remorse for accidentally poisoning his beloved Gertrude; Hamlet merely encourages and supports him in his decision. The stage direction indicating that Noble

[26] Wilde, O. (2020). *The Decay of Lying*. Penguin UK.

Hamlet gives him poison to drink was added—like all of Shakespeare's stage directions—by later editors after his death.

HAMLET
Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damnèd Dane,
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?
Forcing him to drink the poison.
Follow my mother.

Wilde understood Hamlet's indifference to revenge better than Goethe and explained that Hamlet's social function was not assassination but the universal expression of a feeling for therapeutic purposes—just as the catharsis of Greek tragedy was for Aristotle:

> "Have you a grief that corrodes your heart? Steep yourself in the language of grief, learn its utterance from Prince Hamlet and Queen Constance, and you will find that mere expression is a mode of consolation, and that Form, which is the birth of passion, is also the death of pain[27]."

The Homo Sentimentalis that Milan Kundera would analyse in a chapter of his novel "Immortality" also takcles the consequences of such legacy in Western culture:

[27] Ibídem.

> "Homo sentimentalis must be defined not as a person who experiences feelings (because we are all capable of experiencing them), but as a person who has established them as values. As soon as feeling is considered a value, the world wants to feel it; and as we are all proud of our values, the temptation is great to show off our feelings[28]."

This line of exposing our feelings is the culmination of the precept prescribed by Horace in his "Ars Poetica" (The Poetic Art):

> *Si vis me flere, dolendum est Primum tibi est*[29]

Which translates as "If you want me to cry, you must first feel pain yourself." To move others with his words, the ancient poet had to sincerely experience and express the emotions himself. Authenticity and empathy in artistic creation were, since ancient Rome, established as a sine qua non requirement of Western art.

By contrast, Albert Camus creates a character that is also reflective but active, contrary to any outbreak of nihilism, in his play "Caligula." Assuming violence as a consequence of the meaninglessness of life, the fourth Roman emperor maintains his terrifying heroism even as he is stabbed:

> "I am still alive!" ("Je suis encore vivant![30]").

Ontology of suicide and revenge

Albert Camus achieved literary fame by presenting suicide as the raison d'être of philosophy for the post-war generation of the 20th century tormented by the guilt of having patronized Jewish and homosexual extermination in Nazi concentration camps:

> "There is only one really serious philosophical problem: suicide. Judging whether or not life is worth living is answering the fundamental question of philosophy. The rest, if the world has three dimensions, if the mind has nine or twelve categories, comes later. These are games; first you have to answer. And if it is true, as Nietzsche wants, that a philosopher, to be estimable, must set an example, we understand the importance of this response since it will precede the

[28] Kundera, M. (1990). "Il faut définir l'homo sentimentalis non pas comme une personne qui éprouve des sentiments (car nous sommes tous capables d'en éprouver), mais comme une personne qui les a érigés en valeurs. Dès que le sentiment est considéré comme une valeur, tbut le monde veut le ressentir ; et comme nous sommes tous fiers de nos valeurs, la tentation est grande d'exhiber nos sentiments." *L'immortalité : roman.* Paris: Gallimard, 236 -237.

[29] Horatius Flaccus, Q. (1564). *Ars poetica Horatii, et in eam paraphrasis, et parekbolai, siue Commentariolum Ioannis Sambuci Tirnauiensis Pannonij. ex officina Christophori Plantini.* National Central Library of Rome, 8.

[30] Camus, A. (1969). *Caligula*. Gallimard.

definitive gesture. These are obvious facts that are sensitive to the heart, but must be explored more deeply to make them clear to the mind [31]."

Centuries before, Hamlet already asked himself whether or not it is better to commit suicide in his famous monologue, a brief philosophical treatise that posits fear of the afterlife as the main cause of our existence:

"To be or not to be—that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—
No more—and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life."

The greatest battle for Hamlet is not for revenge but for the prolongation of an existence that should be one part action and three parts reasoning. Although he is obsessed with the familial duty of avenging his murdered father, Hamlet's life would have been short due to his melancholic and rebellious nature. However, Hamlet is more than a nihilist; he is a poet, as evidenced by the verses he composes for the group of actors who visit him. This makes him Shakespeare's alter ego, as Wilde also astutely points out:

> "Shakespeare might have met Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the white streets of London or seen the serving-men of rival houses bite their thumbs at each other in the open square, but Hamlet came out of his soul, and Romeo out of his passion. They were elements of his nature to which he gave visible form, impulses that stirred so strongly within him that he had, as it were, perforce, to suffer them to realize their energy, not on the lower plane of actual life, where they would have been trammelled and constrained and so made imperfect, but on that imaginative plane of art[32]."

[31] Camus, Albert (1967). "Il n'y a qu'un probléme philosophique vraiment sérieux : c'est le suicide. Juger que la vie vaut ou ne vaut pas la peine d'étre vécue, c'est répondre à la question fondamentale de la philosophie. Le reste, si le monde a trois dimensions, si l'esprit a neuf ou douze catégories, vient ensuite. Ce sont des jeux ; il faut d'abord répondre. Et s'il est vrai, comme le veut Nietzsche, qu'un philosophe, pour étre estimable, doive précher d'exemple, on saisit l'importance de cette réponse puisqu'elle va précéder le geste définitif. Ce sont là des évidences sensibles au coeur, mais qu'il faut approfondir pour les rendre claires à l'esprit." *Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l'absurde.* Gallimard.

[32] Wilde, O. (1997). *The Critic as Artist.* Green Integer.

It is in weighing his revenge that Hamlet finds reasons to exist, postponing it indefinitely for several years until his potential victims become aware and conspire on two occasions to kill him. Hamlet also discovers, through poetry and Theatre, that forgiveness is preferable to killing. Shakespeare would mature this concept to embody it in Prospero, the magician and sage of "The Tempest":

PROSPERO:
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further.

"Hamlet Unbound" begins with Hamlet's existential monologue, a practice that London Theatre directors have emulated in their productions. My motives were purely dramatic; the monologue is not read as a litany of grievances but as an independent and universal compendium of the struggles that, after renouncing suicide, humanity must face throughout its existence.

"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death?"

Suicide is a privileged human act, since there is no other animal species that prefers to give up life due to suffering or anguish. There are so many reasons why people can commit suicide, as expressions of humanity, from honour
, pride, remorse, love, shame, public execution or stupidity. All the reasons are valid from an ethical point of view, so can we blame someone for being born physiologically stupid?

One of the most difficult tasks of writers is to portray suicide, by virtue of its ability to express the deepest emotions of the human being. Dostoevsky in "The Demons" portrays Kirilov as a rebel against the values of the bourgeoisie who commits suicide to honour the creed to which he has subscribed by transferring his zeal to die for the country to a nihilistic ideology. Kirilov's rebellion is a rejection of the restrictions and social conventions imposed by tsarism and traditional morality, an existential and philosophical challenge and a direct political or revolutionary act:

> "Kirilov, in the greatness of his soul, could not compromise with an idea and shot himself; but I see, of course, that he was a great soul because he had lost his

mind. I can never lose my mind and I can never believe in an idea as much as he does. I can't even get that interested in an idea. “I will never, ever be able to shoot myself.”

Sylvia Plath addresses the topic of suicide in "Lady Lazarus," in which the author compares herself to Lazarus, the biblical character who rose from the dead:

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.
…
This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

In this poem, the poet confesses her repeated attempts to commit suicide, while she promises that she will succeed next time.
But Plath's most revealing poem about suicide is "You Are.":

Clownlike, happiest on your hands,
Feet to the stars, and moon-skulled,
Gilled like a fish. A common-sense
Thumbs-down on the dodo’s mode.
Wrapped up in yourself like a spool,

Trawling your dark as owls do.
Mute as a turnip from the Fourth
Of July to All Fools’ Day,
O high-riser, my little loaf!

In this poem, the poet expresses the pain she felt over the loss of a baby. Plath's death, like that of so many other poets who committed suicide, is not tragic, but epic. The cause of Plath's suicide should not be found in his personal problems, but in his incompatible sensitivity with the harshness of the world, a cause of sadness and despair. Plath, like Kirilov, was a woman tormented by her own inner demons. She suffered from depression, anxiety and bipolarity, according to psychologists, but the greatest evil in the world is awareness. The mistreatment of her husband, also a poet, and the death of her baby was a devastating blow to her.

Her work is a beautiful testimony of human suffering, a compendium of poems as heartbreaking as they are honest. Plath didn't mince words; She sang to her darkest emotions openly, as every suicide does before us with her final gesture, as expressed by a contrite Fernando Pessoa:

> “When they told me yesterday that the tobacconist's employee had committed suicide I felt it was a lie. Poor thing, it also existed! We had forgotten that, all of us, all of us who knew him in the same way as all of us who didn't know him. Tomorrow we will forget it better. But if there was a soul, there was one to kill. Passions? Distress? Without a doubt... But for me, as for all humanity, all that remains is the memory of a silly smile on a mixed coat, dirty and uneven on the shoulders. That's all I have left, of someone who felt so much that he killed himself *from feeling*, because, at the end of the day, you shouldn't kill someone for something else...[33]”

Oedipal ontology

Hamlet's quasi-incestuous relationships with his mother Gertrude lead Freud to diagnose Hamlet as the quintessential sufferer of the Oedipus complex. According to Freud, his delay in avenging Claudius lies in Hamlet's secret admiration for Claudius, who poisoned his father to sleep with his mother. The son's jealousy towards his mother's new lover is evident in the famous scene after Polonius's death.

GERTRUDE
Oh, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

[33] Pessoa, F. (2013). “Quando ontem me disseram que o empregado da tabacaria se tinha suicidado, tive uma impressão de mentira. Coitado, também existia! Tínhamos esquecido isso, nós todos, nós todos que o conhecíamos do mesmo modo que todos que o não conheceram. Amanhã esquecê-lo-emos melhor. Mas que havia alma, havia, para que se matasse. Paixões? Angústias? Sem dúvida... Mas a mim, como à humanidadeinteira, há só a memória de um sorriso parvo por cima de um casaco de mescla, sujo, e desigual nos ombros. É quanto me resta, a mim, de quem tanto sentiu que se matou de sentir, porque, enfim, de outra coisa se não deve matar alguém...” *Livro do Desassossego.* Luso Livros, § 317.

HAMLET
A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother, as to kill a king and marry with his brother.

GERTRUDE
As kill a king?

HAMLET
Ay, lady, it was my word.

(…)

GERTRUDE
What have I done, that thou dar’st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET (fierce)
Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths. O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. Heaven’s face doth glow.
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at.

GERTRUDE
Ah me! what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

Let us not forget that Hamlet is a teenager prone to passionately denounce injustices. Prudence, if anything, is a gift of maturity. Just as a baby refuses to breathe until it receives a slap that makes it aware of its new reality, so does the adolescent shout upon discovering the world's intrigues until "the whips and scorns of outrageous fortune" force them to hide their thoughts and emotions.

Ontology of Art and Theatre

The doubts that arise in Hamlet's mind due to the nature of his father's ghost are precisely what lead him to engage with poetry and dramatic art.

Polonius considers this inclination harmless, so he persuades Claudius to subsidize the stay of a Theatre group at court and make it available to young Hamlet:

KING
With all my heart, and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge
And drive his purpose into these delights.

Hamlet is compelled to write a short play in which he will unravel the motivations and actions of his father's supposed murderers: his uncle, the now King Claudius, and his mother Gertrude, who is in mourning but newly married at the same time. His original purpose, as naive as the frankness and teenage dramatics of Hamlet, is to catch Claudius off guard, making him a victim of his own conscience. However, during the process of staging his play, the Prince gains a renewed understanding of the story.

Before executing his dramatic trap, the actors perform before Hamlet the death of Priam at the hands of Pyrrhus, in front of his wife Hecuba. This scene is the response from ancient times to the questions posed in the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. If in the 17th century, Shakespeare laments the hypocrisy of civil society, in the 11th century BC, poets could only denounce the brutality and cruelty of the victors, who violated and enslaved defeated queens. Compared to the Achaean warriors, Claudius appears as a gentleman who had the delicacy to seduce his defeated brother's queen, allowing him, through their marriage, to maintain the throne.

FIRST PLAYER
But who, ah woe, had seen the moblèd queen—
…
Run barefoot up and down, threat’ning the flames
With bisson rheum, a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
About her lank and all o’erteemèd loins
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up—
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
’Gainst Fortune’s state would treason have
pronounced.
But if the gods themselves did see her then
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband’s limbs,
The instant burst of clamor that she made
(Unless things mortal move them not at all)
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven
And passion in the gods.

Hamlet also realizes that an individual's or a social group's worst calamity acquires meaning before an audience. Those who expect permanent happiness and tranquillity run the risk of falling into monotony. Hamlet's own inaction, as Goethe and Wilde pointed

out, takes on a leading role that makes him the precursor of characters like Bartleby, K., Molloy, Malone, and the Unnamable.

Kafka takes to the extreme the inaction and despair present in Hamlet. In his story "Before the Law" ("Vor dem Gesetz"), a man must wait decades, until his old age, for a door to be opened that allows him to reach the Law; The guardian who protects it does not allow it and warns him that if he passes through it there will be more doors with guardians more powerful than him, who will not let him access the Law either. Already almost blind, and in the midst of his agony, the man asks the guardian why no one else wanted to enter, like him, through that door, to which the guardian responds that this forbidden door had been designed only for him, and that after his death it will be closed. The oppression and helplessness we feel in those two pages make an indelible impression on the reader.

However, we can wonder if this waiting is absurd or, on the contrary, necessary for a Czech writer of Jewish descent to give us this short story about the importance and meaning of frustration. Like Hamlet, the man before the law does not commit suicide but waits day after day, year after year, with the firm belief that someday he will find a solution to his dilemmas.

Despite having the King and the law against him, Hamlet also prefers to exist because he understands that it is better to be than not to be, that to fight is preferable to sleep, and that to suffer is better than to rest.

In the final lines of the play, Shakespeare makes a reference to his profession as a playwright. Throughout the play, Horatio evokes the great Roman poet, author of the "Eclogues," as well as the poet Virgil, his literary friend. Like Virgil in Dante's "Divine Comedy," Horatio is the counsellor and guide to the protagonist on his journey through the underworld. Following Friedrich Schlegel's definition of the ideal spectator, Horatio also embodies the role that the chorus played in Greek tragedy, an element absent in the secularized Elizabethan Theatre.

It is to Horatio that Hamlet entrusts the task of writing his story for future generations:

HAMLET
O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

Writing is indeed to absent oneself from happiness to construct, through the pain of reliving the past, life itself.

Homer had sung in The Odyssey:

The gods gave suffering to men,
So that poets would have something to sing.

In the Theatre arena, Shakespeare broadens the perspective: spectators must relive the greatest sufferings on the stage, sharing the certainty that they themselves could represent them:

HORATIO
Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
…
And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I
Truly deliver.

Vertigo, Normalcy, and Fantasy in Times of Pandemic

A historian examining previous plagues or pandemics throughout history would observe strikingly similar patterns of behaviour to those unfolding today. Initially, the media sought to reassure us by highlighting our scientific and psychological advancement over antiquity. However, doubts now shroud our belief in outlasting plagues more competently than our ancestors. While vaccination statistics offer optimism, the existential dimension, akin to the inquiries of Saint Augustine, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Sartre, remains hesitant to generalize. Cold, abstract numbers provide scant consolation to grieving families.

Liquid Calamity: The Vertigo of Survival

Sociology has tirelessly strived to identify behavioural patterns within social groups. Zygmunt Bauman, credited with formulating the concept of "liquid modernity,"

offered a perspective tailored to a generation accustomed to instantaneity. While it is true that the traditional ideal of a solid, enduring society has given way to a citizenry more adaptable to circumstances, Bauman's insights emerged as a reaction to the wartime pessimism he inherited. The survivor, in essence, epitomizes the fluid nature of humanity, enabling us to endure wars, plagues, and natural disasters.

Apart from capturing the zeitgeist on the precipice of collapse, Bauman recognized a common adaptive social pattern shared by all humankind since the shift from hunting to agriculture for survival. "Mater artium necessitas," a proverb inspired by Socrates' economic inquiry, echoes this sentiment. In countries that never attained the solid modernity presupposed by Bauman or in those where it remained unstable, such as Colombia, one frequently encounters proverbs like "No one drowns in a glass of water," "A sleeping shrimp gets carried away by the current," or "In the absence of bread, cakes will suffice." These sayings serve as ideological consolations for economies struggling to provide stable professions and unemployment benefits. In liquid or catastrophic times, within economies reliant on loans from the World Bank and the IMF, the modern citizen-in-the-making will embark on new businesses, migrations, and professions as long as survival permits. Solid modernity will merely coexist as a utopia, akin to the American dream or the unanticipated wealth that one's fortune may hold.

In their daily lives, most will adopt the optimism of Winnie, the protagonist buried alive in Samuel Beckett's play "The Happy Days." Nevertheless, this liquid, perhaps even gaseous, survival project has already demonstrated its sporadic efficacy, be it in the Hebrews who emigrated and established the nation of Israel in texts or the 17th-century Mayflower pioneers who founded what would become the United States.

Not only is post-industrial modernity liquid; Man is when he faces new realities or states of normality in times of calamity. It is the man in a state of vertigo.

The Fable or Synthesis of the World

In his celebrated story "Letter to a Lady in Paris[34]," Cortázar narrates the tale of a writer who occasionally vomits up a rabbit. Central to this narrative is the theme of normalcy. The protagonist, burdened by his peculiar and unsettling gift—analogous to Gregorio Samsa's transformation one fateful morning in the early 20th century, struggles to restore a sense of stability and familiarity. Readers accompany him as he endeavours to create understandable and steady patterns, achieving fleeting moments of success, always accompanied by considerable suffering. Yet, the external elements and events the writer encounters eventually overwhelm him, culminating in a tragic outcome.

Cortazar's parable illustrates the mathematical-gnoseological model that has pervaded the natural sciences since Bacon's time: if A corresponds to 1 and B to 1, then G should correspond to 1, not 2, 4, or even 8. This model still underpins the social sciences today, including modern sociology.

Cortazar's fundamental question is: what is normal? He grapples with this query as he confides in Andrée:

[34] Cortázar, J. (1993). *Bestiario*. Editorial Sudamericana, p. 19.

"Andrée, don't blame me. From time to time it happens to me to throw up a bunny."

However, the protagonist divulges that this normalcy will remain intact only as long as it remains concealed:

> "As has always happened to me when I was alone, I kept the fact in the same way that so many records of what happens are kept (or makes one happen) in total privacy (…) It is not a reason not to live in any house, it is not a reason for one to have to be ashamed and be isolated and keep silent."

The story is steeped in anguish from the outset, as the character fears being deemed abnormal and, akin to Gregorio Samsa, dreads losing his job, imprisonment, and a life of obscurity.

It is not just the moral, not even the plot or story, but mainly its equivalence or correspondence with universal patterns of life. By reading in a story the synthesis or structure of scenes witnessed or experienced, the reader reaches climax, catharsis, or the intellectual pleasure of certainty in the parallel universe of art. Plato prescribed that the best books are those that reveal to us what we already knew but had never expressed before.

All art and literature, or all sensible expression of the idea–in Hegel's words, arises as correspondence, the brief synthesis that is the essence or map of the vast reality.

Polti's 36 dramatic structures correspond, according to their author, to all possible human dramas, condensed in the works of the great playwrights, from Aeschylus to Lope de Vega and Victor Hugo, standing out above all William Shakespeare, who, according to Polti, only avoids one of the universal dramatic situations, the one in which the tragic hero murders a close relative by accident. Such was the favourite plot of Victor Hugo's plays, as he tells us with a hint of sarcasm:

> Note now that Shakespeare, whom critics want to consider as akin to the art of 1830, when in reality he is its opposite (and they impose the same epigraph on the Bible, the Nibelungs, the orientalism of Turkish carpets, Brahminical India, the Japanese and Pointed Architecture), — Shakespeare, I say, did not once use plot number 19, so fashionable today, since its circumstances are entirely accidental and without any connection with his strong studies on the will[35].

Shakespeare remains the most studied writer, as his works continue to possess unparalleled universal significance. His work seems to be the most ambitious effort to represent reality in a literary corpus, if anything comparable to the works of Dante, Balzac or García Márquez. In Emerson's words, Shakespeare was a writer who was inspired not only by history but who also fused all literary traditions, from the auto sacramental to swashbuckling dramas, farce, and commedia dell'arte, to create a work of excellency.

In Romeo and Juliet, the plague hits the city of Verona, although the characters are unaware of the disease as much as Cortazar's protagonist. It is only when Friar Juan, due to the quarantine, cannot give Romeo the letter in which he explains that Juliet is not

[35] [35] Polti, G. (1903). *Les trente-six situations dramatiques*. Mercure de France, 109.

really dead, that Romeo commits suicide; His ignorance of the greatest evil of his era leads him to suicide. Both Romeo and Cortazar's unnamed character fail to adapt their lives to their changing reality.

The Heroism of Survival

Joseph Campbell, a comparative mythologist, recognized art's synthetic power and developed the universal hero model, characterizing the young hero who embarks on a quest across the world to bestow an epic destiny upon his homeland, as Kavakis chants at the end of his most celebrated poem:

> *You will understand the fate*
> *Of those born in Ithaca*

However, the hero's journey diverges considerably between different narratives. The Manichean ethical structure depicted in Hollywood and Marvel films portrays heroes achieving fame, wealth, or power through unscrupulous means. Conversely, the older Homer hailed Ulysses' cunning as genuine heroism, emphasizing diplomacy over brute force. The picaresque novel champions heroes who triumph through deception, and Don Quixote navigates the trials of a rational world. The compassionate ethical structure presents a transcendental hero who defies death: Buddhists and Hindus applaud heroes who detach themselves from their earthly affections (fathers, mothers, spouses, children) until they reach Nirvana and become gods; Saints like Saint Therese of Lisieux face suffering and illness with a love that redeems condemned souls; Samuel Beckett's characters are heroes for the mere fact of not committing suicide, that is, for surviving when there is no reason to do so.

Elias Canetti, drawing inspiration from the Jewish extermination during World War II, contemplated the heroes who craftily fight for their survival during times of war and chaos. He affirmed in "Masse und Macht":

> The moment of survival is the moment of power. The horror of death dissolves in the satisfaction of not being the dead oneself[36].

Aristophanes' judgment in "The Frogs," which favoured Aeschylus over Euripides for his defense of war and self-sacrifice, is revaluated in light of Canetti's perspective, underlining that accusations of cowardice should not tarnish these heroes' cunning. Greeks recognized that cowardice concealed supreme craftiness—Ulysses concluded a protracted war with the cunning of a wooden horse. In challenging times, the greatest virtue isn't strength or bravery but rather temperance or prudence.

Early in 2020, alarming reports emerged of a virus spreading in China. The media fanned the flames, and the World Health Organization sounded the alarm. It was then that a passage from a Samuel Beckett biography, where he encounters a Jewish friend on the streets of Paris in early 1939, resurfaced in my thoughts. Beckett had questioned why his friend had not left Europe. His friend, placing unwavering trust in the official

Canetti, E. (1981). *Masse und Macht*. Fischer Taschenbuch. 249.

statements of the German government—Goebbels, to be precise, dismissed rumours of Hitler's anti-Semitism. He, like one of Beckett's characters, remained oblivious to the severe discrimination and violence against Jews in Germany. Canetti's analysis of the individual who had long felt secure within the crowd and is hesitant to relinquish this security, even when life is at stake, became vividly apparent. Throughout the pandemic, the manipulation of mass emotions through media and social networks confirmed Canetti's observations.

In February 2020, I travelled to Cartagena just days after the World Health Organization advised against wearing masks, reserving them for the sick only. Reflecting on the aforementioned fables and recalling Canetti's analysis of Flavius Josephus's chronicles, the sole survivor of the Jotapata fortress's destruction in 67 BC, I decided to don a face mask at Palonegro airport's gates. To my surprise, I was the sole individual wearing a mask. In the airport's waiting room, I encountered an old friend and his girlfriend who were perplexed by my cautious approach. They argued that the coronavirus was only lethal for those over fifty, citing WHO recommendations.

I shared photos of my journey on social media, prompting another acquaintance to ridicule the "muzzle" I wore. A grumpy elderly woman became my travel companion on the flight, glaring at me disdainfully throughout the journey. The only thing missing was her questioning whether I was flouting WHO guidelines or carrying the virus. I remained silent, unable to refute the crowd's pressure.

Upon arriving in Cartagena, I was struck by the carelessness of both tourists and residents. At the university where I served as an academic peer evaluator, I observed neither teachers nor students wearing masks. Only in my hotel, located outside the tourist hub, did the employees use hand sanitizers. Upon returning to Bucaramanga, the media reported that a taxi driver from Cartagena had succumbed to the coronavirus, allegedly infected by a group of foreign tourists visiting the walled city. Speculation arose that this taxi driver had further exposed hundreds of tourists who had already returned to various parts of Colombia. Understandably, in the subsequent weeks, several acquaintances began avoiding me on the streets.

It wasn't until June that the WHO recommended mask usage, and this abrupt change took time to assimilate. In August, I interviewed a patriarch who, during our conversation, consistently removed his mask. He assured me that he did not fear death. Just a few weeks later, he fell ill with the virus and passed away.

Between Vertigo, Denial, and Contempt

Cortazar’s protagonist finds the adaptability required in the changing norms of normalcy so agonizing that he contemplates suicide. The vertigo of residing in a world no longer aligned with the accepted norms or the natural order, as defined by a majority he had long trusted, propels him towards an unnatural act. Assessing the shifts in normalcy thrust upon us during the COVID-19 pandemic, we discover that the Cortazian hero's predicament closely parallels the challenges we have encountered over the past fifteen months. I outline five scenarios of normalcy with which we have grappled:

1. The virus is akin to a common flu, non-lethal for young individuals, rendering face masks unnecessary.
2. The virus is similar to a common flu, non-lethal for young individuals, yet face mask usage is advised.
3. The virus causes severe illness and death, with potential lethality for young individuals, necessitating mandatory face mask usage.
4. The virus necessitates a quarantine until contagion peaks subside.
5. The virus can be 90% prevented through vaccines, albeit with potential side effects.

In none of these normal scenarios have we managed to control the virus. Feeling secure would be the gravest mistake in times of calamity, and paradoxically, we require vertigo to survive. Like Hitchcock's character, we have slipped from a seemingly secure roof and clung to a malleable gutter on the tenth floor of a rapidly expanding building. The emergence of new, more virulent strains prevents any respite. We must ponder whether living with deadly viruses will become a daily reality, to the extent that, like Isaac Asimov's villain in "The Naked Sun," we begin to abhor physical contact with fellow human beings.

We find ourselves navigating between Scylla and Charybdis. In our current state of normalcy, we willingly submit to vaccination, even though it isn't entirely safe and its effectiveness has proven to be less than fool proof.

Some choose a stance of denial in the face of each new normality. Much like Prince Prospero in Edgar Allan Poe's tale, who sought to evade the Red Death, numerous millionaires have opted to lock themselves within secured mansions and castles until the threat subsides.

A third stance is instinctive contempt for official discourse. Aesop's fox, unable to reach some green grapes he was jumping for with such eagerness, presumed that he now despised them because they weren't ripe. The cynic who hides her weakness in her presumption is actually a victim of a discourse that imposes challenges or rivals on us that surpass our capabilities. We know the fox is lying, and there are ripe grapes that are green, but isn't it human to justify failure, to avoid ridicule? Aesop lived in a generation where being weak flirted with death. Only in Olympia or in Marathon or Salamis did the victors fit. And while our modern sensibility is more varied due to deconstructionism and affirmative action, to the point that there will be those who pity the fox for its physical limitations, our editors and journalists still preserve the morality of the Ancien Régime, in which the powerful manifest themselves in their challenge to gods and men. The fox is helpless for not reaching the grapes, just as those who die from the plague are helpless due to their immunological deficiencies. Post-mortem explanations are as unnecessary as justifications for the fox.

Rules of the reality game.

Cortazar's fable also evokes equivalences about our perception of normalcy. "We live in atypical times" is a phrase we often hear today, but it was preceded by "we live in difficult times," and even further back by "we live in wonderful times." Each generation defines its environment after a series of confrontations in the media arena, whose ultimate purpose is nothing other than to determine what is "normal." The press, and to a lesser extent, the academy, fulfils in our era the function that the clergy exercised from ancient times until the French Revolution: to dictate the rules of the reality game. It doesn't matter that in the past, they sacrificed a peasant named Joan after defeating the English army in Orleans in 1429, or that Catherine de' Medici massacred her Protestant subjects on the night of St. Bartholomew; it was enough that the church declared that this peasant was a witch or that this queen was a champion of faith to believe it and forget it.

Luther, like that child who denounced the nakedness of the king pretending to wear his invisible clothes, pointed out the false normality of the clergy in Rome and formulated a new reality. The fact that he was emulated by Calvin, and that both are guilty of puritanism, reflects another concern of Cortazar's protagonist. If there is something abnormal that we cannot control, we first want to hide it discreetly. The Puritans made virtue the rule of government and administration, and today, a politician stays in power as long as they preserve their public virtues and private vices.

At the beginning of his story, Cortázar describes the symptoms of a tranquil and normal life:

> "Ah, dear Andrée, how difficult it is to oppose, even while accepting it with the entire submission of one's own being, the meticulous order that a woman establishes in her light residence... Moving that cup alters the web of relationships throughout the house."

It is only later, not without a trace of horror, that the protagonist informs us that he vomits little rabbits. Strangely, we are carried away by his sensitivity, and we presume a new order under new rules:

> "Between the first and second floor, Andrée, as an announcement of what my life would be like in her house, I knew I was going to vomit a little rabbit. Immediately, I was afraid (or was it strangeness? No, fear of the same strangeness, perhaps) because just before leaving my house, only two days before, I had vomited a little rabbit and was sure for a month, maybe five weeks, perhaps six with a bit of luck."

The abnormal normality of the subject is to vomit a rabbit every month or month and a half. But upon arriving at Andrée's house, the author vomits a rabbit after two days. The subject now lives in an abnormal time! His suffering is greater, not so much because he engenders more little rabbits, but because he has to humiliate his past self, the one who lived happily believing he would vomit a rabbit every month and a half. The destruction of his previous self is, as the protagonist confesses, painful, but it gives way to a new self that reinterprets the previous one, a self that determines the number of rabbits per period. Its function, on the other hand, is to bring peace to the intellect or the feeling of permanence of his self:

> "Customs, Andrée, are concrete forms of rhythm, they are the quota of rhythm that helps us live."

After just a few days, this recent self, the one born out of the fear and tears of the deceased self, also questions itself:

> "As for me, from the tenth (rabbits) to the eleventh, there is an insurmountable gap."

The anger or disappointment of the character is then unleashed against the little rabbits, which he kills shortly after they are born, and now leads the protagonist to his end. The lover who drowns because her lover abandoned her, the millionaire who loses his fortune and commits suicide before taking a minimum wage job, the philosopher who poisons himself upon learning he has dementia, or the arms trafficker who dies in a shootout rather than go to jail are all akin to Cortazar's protagonist, a passive being who refers to The Hanged Man, card number 12 of the Marseille Tarot, a character who does not know which direction to take due to his inability to conceive a third option different from the two that his normality offers him; the lady does not expect a third lover, the millionaire does not believe that food is enough, and the philosopher does not conceive that his will prevails over his ailment.

The suffering of a human being, the character of Cortázar tells us, will be greater the better they understand what they have conceived of themselves: his protagonist is capable of creating and enduring two new selves, two new normalities, one after the other, with new rules of the game, until the emergence of a fourth self leads him to self-destruction.

Fifteen months after the pandemic, the social question is, how many times can I reinvent myself until the world heals? Is it fair to ask egos that have already survived for decades to reformulate themselves, to acknowledge their mistakes?

The survivors will be those who complete their readaptation through vertigo, denial, or contempt.

A New Hypocrisy

But the pandemic has also transformed communications, or, if we look at pre-pandemic technological advances, it has accelerated an announced change. For some

years now, there has been talk of the end of universities, newspapers, and bureaucracy. It's true that each profession or institution, like any human being, has the ability to adapt to changes by transforming or reinventing itself. But the invasion of cameras and microphones into private life has had a cost. The double standard established by Protestantism collapses in a universe where everything can be transmitted, filmed, or reconstructed. A few weeks ago, another video went viral in a trial that shook a nation, where one of the honourable jurists, in an office crowded with books and records, engaged in sexual relations with his spouse. It is clarified that the protagonist forgot to turn off his camera before the scandal. The scene has been replayed several times and has even catapulted the fame of several personalities. The transmission of private scenes of respectable ladies and celebrities is transforming our concept of privacy.

Literature, history, and religion have given us, and continue to give us, universal archetypes that correspond to heroes or gods of other cultures, and that blend without distinguishing nationality, language, social class, sexual orientation, or fortune; they are, in the words of Joseph Campbell, archetypes of the unconscious. Until the advent of American Affirmative Action and the imposition of laws against inappropriate expression, citizens enjoyed relative tranquillity under the protection of their prejudices. The heroes we admired eliminated dark-skinned thugs without hesitation (Dirty Harry, THE WARRIOR), and they could just as easily be excited by beautiful girls (Benny Hill, THE JESTER). Until, not without reason, they were informed that from now on, flirting and seduction would be regulated. Shortly thereafter, Benny Hill would cancel his sexist show with blondes who, in the silence of their unemployment, would learn that they had been objectified. During the 21st century, Western culture has experienced a symbolic war in which the historically representative archetypes of masculinity have been defeated.

The new generation is, as a result, more feminine, as opposed to the aggressive male competitiveness of the past. But in contrast, in the private sphere, pornography persists in the fantasy of an enslaved woman. Due to the disappearance of privacy, affirmative action hesitates to condemn an equivalent market worth nearly $100 billion in 2019. Hypocrisy is transformed, and it is now more subtle, exclusive, conscious, and generous, making consumption the exorcist of its social prejudices.

However, moral changes do not necessarily lead to a transformation of the individual. The zeal with which Twitter users attacked the Disney actress who dared to express support for the defeated Republicans recently, forcing her employers to fire her, is the same zeal that condemns Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to deviate from her theological postulates, as Octavio Paz warned when comparing her process to the false socialist trials:

> "My generation saw the revolutionaries of 1917, Lenin and Trotsky's companions, confess crimes to their judges that were unreal in a language that was an abject parody of Marxism, just as the sanctimonious language of the protests that Sor Juana signed with her blood is a caricature of religious language. The cases of the 20th-century Bolsheviks and the 18th-century nun-poet are very different, but it is undeniable that, despite the numerous differences, there is an essential and disturbing similarity between them: these are events that can only

happen in closed societies, ruled by a political and ecclesiastical bureaucracy that governs in the name of orthodoxy[37]."

As in any change in morality, the first to set foot on the firm ground of censorship and condemnation are the censors and judges of the previous normality.

Since 2012, we have seen almost daily the hypocrites who are unmasked by their own videos: this influencer gives a homeless person cookies with toothpaste, that one hits his girlfriend in an elevator, this senator insults the mother of his fellow party member, that one throws a pet ten meters away. The façade of monastic humility, typical of neopuritanism, crumbles as soon as one of the social networks reveals a video of adultery, arrogance, or greed. The seven deadly sins, which in the Middle Ages were seen as mere weaknesses, are now treated as unforgivable sins, and the paranoia of cyber espionage leads celebrities to hide the cameras on their computers and cell phones.

Art, an Existential Lifeline

From the darkness of cinemas and the complicity of the night, the masses dream of determined heroes capable of defeating injustice. The cosmic, and metaphysical level of the narrative of Oedipus, the drunkenness of Falstaff, the triumphs of Mr. Bourne, the ethical delirium of Mr. Smith in Washington, and the efforts of Thénardier, the protagonist of Victor Hugo's Les Misérables, are more admired than the feats of Alexander the Great and the laws of Augustus. The masses watch movies and series because there are no longer masks there: actors show the falls and triumphs of those who challenge the system, although censorship imposes conditions: one cannot discuss too much about migrations and economic laws that favour lending nations. We live in the real world, but we inhabit a parallel world that is imaginary, the one that the Indian musician Bharata described two thousand years ago. Those who confuse both spheres are excluded by the majority as mad, maladjusted, or failures.

The invention of writing consolidated the hypocritical behaviour that Homer and Sophocles had already accused in Ulysses. But if the nature of the hypocrite in the modern age was stable and lasting, the globalized era has witnessed a crumbling of its surroundings. Due to the ubiquity of cameras, the media denounce day by day the double standards of the Tartuffes, the Malvolios (a character from a Shakespearean comedy), the embezzlers, and the corrupt. They are shown trading favours, pardons, and plundered territories; they are accused of amassing fortunes in tax havens under their in-laws' names, and they surround themselves with lawyers who free them from any conviction. However, these scandals require interpretation. English "spin," or the art of ending a scandal with a partially false interpretation, has taken over the political discourse of the 21st century to the point that citizens trust more in their personal impression of politicians than in true information about them: "They know that, in practice, they are following an illusion, but they still follow it."

[37] Paz, O. (1994). *Obras completas de Octavio Paz: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, o, Las trampas de la fe. Spanje:* Círculo de Lectores, 545.

The spread of lies and political partisanship manifests in an interconnected world, where hiding a secret is increasingly difficult. It no longer matters that a sexual encounter is forgiven as a night of sorrow, as Cassavetes depicts in one of his films; adultery is recorded and becomes viral on social networks. The social stigma destroys lives or, as in the case of the Kardashians, elevates them. Morality gives way to fashion and the prevailing concept of beauty.

In the midst of statistical darkness, the hegemony of the media, it is art that illuminates existence: in a poem, there are no imposed precepts. Philosophers, since Plato exposed the myth of the Cave, have warned us of the dangers of sincerity. But

artists do not pretend universal judgments; instead, they express fables. Their work is akin to Baudelaire's butcher who cuts his meat without cruelty:

I will mistreat you without anger
And without hatred, like a butcher,
Like Moses struck the rock!

It was Petronius who praised Emperor Nero with satires that could well be read as anathemas to his empire; also, Jean Anouilh portrayed the Nazis in occupied France, an adaptation of Antigone that expressed the dilemma faced by those in France secretly protecting Jews. Instead of taking offense, the Nazis subsidized art that represented a shared reality.

The fable also explains the popularity of Don Quixote, whose denunciation of injustices in 17th-century Spain did not offend its rigid society. If Don Quixote sees Windmills that become Giants, his subsequent criticisms of the treatment of serfs and prisoners should be read as a mere joke. Even in our era, a writer like Carlos Fuentes invited people on a TV show to read Don Quixote primarily as a humorous novel. But how bitter are our laughs at the anguish of a Sancho flying through the air as a victim of group bullying! A poet who accurately captured the spirit of Don Quixote was Paul Verlaine:

To Don Quixote

Oh Don Quixote! Old paladin, great bohemian,
In vain does the vile and absurd rabble mock you
Your death was martyrdom and your life a poem
The windmills have already died, oh, my king!
Always go, go forever, shielded by your faith
Ride on your fantastic steed, which I love so much
Sublime gleaner, go! The neglect of the law
Is more numerous, greater than what time reveals to us.
Hurray! We will follow you, we, the saints and poets
Mounted on the horse of madness and verbena
Lead us to the assault of the peaks of fantasy
And soon, despite all betrayals
The winged standard of Poetry will wave
Over the insipid skull of inept reason.

And while it is healthy to recommend books like Albert Camus' "The Plague" or Álvaro Vanegas' horror novel "Virus" in times of pandemic, Don Quixote is, after sacred books, the best novel against vertigo; his adventures are a universal call to individual freedom through fantasy. Don Quixote can also be considered the only sane one who fights against the false truths of his time. Like Abraham, his only guide is the inspiration that God or his own conscience or madness breathes into his thoughts, and if he sees Christians in chains, even if they are prisoners of the King, he frees them. Thus, Luis Buñuel never saw madness as a manifestation of stupidity, but as an expression of the individual spirit that every society leads us to repress or even renounce. "Nazarín" (1959),

based on a novel by Benito Pérez Galdós, is a film in which a devout priest also helps a criminal who later commits a crime.

In these months of the pandemic, we have also heard the voices of those rejected by the establishment, from the French Professor Didier Raoult who advised Chloroquine, to those who diagnosed Ivermectin and those who prescribed Moringa tea as remedies against the coronavirus.

With "The Adventures of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha," Cervantes invites us to live out fantasies to survive societies that in times of crisis do not admit dissidence. Amidst uncertainty, surviving a pandemic normality that crumbles and rebuilds every three months, aesthetic experience revives the immaterial inventory of dreams, aspirations, and the healthiest feelings.

The philosophers most applauded by the media express their bewilderment or despair in the face of the pandemic, and in the news, we read about the increase in suicides among young people. Social campaigns based on the absence of pain presumed, perhaps without realizing it, that life was contrary to pain. And how to explain to young people the pain of renouncing the world's scenarios and their community to limit their existence to the scenarios of their homes, with virtual education? The "generation of glass" is weak due to the education they have received, as the child has no freedom of choice. If the classics of Aeschylus, Virgil, and Cervantes, not to mention Homer or Dante, were part of their studies, the psychological impact could be lessened, as much of their bewilderment, as Shakespeare already expressed it, has been caused by reducing the scenarios in their lives.

In light of Lev Vygotsky's writings, education has undergone a slight revaluation of the classics since the 1990s. Not in vain was Vygotsky's first writing about Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. His vision of multicultural learning based on cultural signs, or, as Vygotsky calls them from linguistics, culturally constructed symbols, had already made the former Soviet Union of the 1960s a nation of cosmopolitan citizens. Such learning is guided by teachers who become not just administrators of knowledge but mediators serving each learner. Even a doctor in law prefers to learn a software program with the mediation of an accomplished colleague or a Professor.

Mediation, if not information, is what explains the survival of the teacher in an era of university crisis due to the pandemic.

Series of Eras and Places

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players

William Shakespeare

They are all merely actors
But the entire world is not just one stage
But a series of entries and places

The years of dissent will return
Against so much lethargy and decay

They will once again make of nations continents

And we will travel on bridges that support
Languages and stages, crowds
As long as only promises keep us

The pains of the plague teach us
That every pain was promising
Imagination they severed.

Ontology of Waiting

For centuries, philosophy has confined the problem of faith to religion. Theology, on the other hand, has reduced the issue of believing to belief in Christian dogma. The immaculate conception of Jesus and his no less miraculous resurrection were events beyond common sense that had to be authenticated by reducing faith to the absurd. "I believe because it is absurd," wrote Tertullian in "On the Flesh of Christ" (De Carne Christi 5). However, faith is not a condition imposed by a particular creed. St. Thomas Aquinas described it as a state of being based on habit and virtue; Hegel as a manifestation of the mind that the philosopher cannot dismiss as irrational. Kierkegaard was, I believe, the first philosopher to understand the close relationship between faith and consciousness. The will to believe is unmistakable from the need to believe. A person's inner convictions cannot be dismissed as the mere incidental product of a historical process. Husserl acutely wrote that consciousness originally lives in the element of belief; the poet César Vallejo finds his happiness within himself: "My joy comes from my faith in this personal discovery of life."

Unamuno wrote that existence would be unbearable without faith; his interpretation is as evangelical as it is philosophical. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the disciples are in a boat threatened by a storm until they decide to wake Jesus. Before calming the sea, Jesus reproaches them for their lack of faith. But scepticism had already appeared in the book of Genesis as the original cause of sin, when Eve doubts the word of God.

Ontology of faith in Samuel Beckett

"Waiting for Godot" could be remembered as the foremost metaphysical work of the twentieth century, deeper than Heidegger's "Being and Time" and certainly more human than Sartre's "Being and Nothingness." Since its premiere in Paris in 1953, literary critics have noted the play's allusion to an immaterial, ever-absent God. But reducing the complexity of Beckett's most famous play to a simple interpretation would be a mistake; credit should go to Balzac, who wrote "Mercadet" in 1847, a comedy where a character named Godeau is

supposed to solve the characters' financial problems and, like in Beckett's work, never arrives.

"Waiting for Godot" expresses an existential theme: faith. Like many Irish children, Beckett received a dogmatic religious education, which was soon challenged by his readings in science and philosophy. But the metaphysical questions posed by the Christian faith would haunt Beckett throughout his life. Centuries before Beckett, Abelard had redefined faith as "subtantia rerum sperandum" (Hebrews 11:1), a definition that could well encapsulate the plot of "Waiting for Godot": "the substance of things we are waiting for." Vladimir and Estragon suffer the certainty that Godot will never come, yet both preserve faith in his arrival. However, both characters avoid any direct reference to faith. Only once does Vladimir describe Lucky as a faithful (fidéle) servant, a statement that could be dismissed as a mere familiar expression.

VLADIMIR:
And now you turn him away? Such an old and faithful servant!

But the act of being faithful is, as we will see later, richer than the static definition implied by the noun "faith."

Beckett prefers to use two widely used verbs along his play: believe and think. Vladimir, Estragon, and Pozzo use them as synonyms. In the French version, Vladimir replies "Je crois" when asked if the name of the man they are waiting for is Godot: "I believe so," a phrase that Beckett translates into English as "I think so."

In "Waiting for Godot," the fundamental problem of existence is not faith itself, but the continuous dilemma between faith and scepticism. The will to believe, and yet, by the very nature of the mind, reluctance to believe. The solid habit of existence is constantly hindered by the faint touches of thought. In a tour de force, Beckett stages the tragedy of pondering an illogical world. First, when Pozzo asks Lucky to think. His monologue, as is well known, is full of metaphysical themes:

"Given the existence... of a personal God... with white beard... outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda…"

And later, when Vladimir and Estragon are tormented by their previous musings:

VLADIMIR:
When you seek you hear.
ESTRAGON:
You do.
VLADIMIR:
That prevents you from finding.
ESTRAGON:
It does.
VLADIMIR:
That prevents you from thinking.

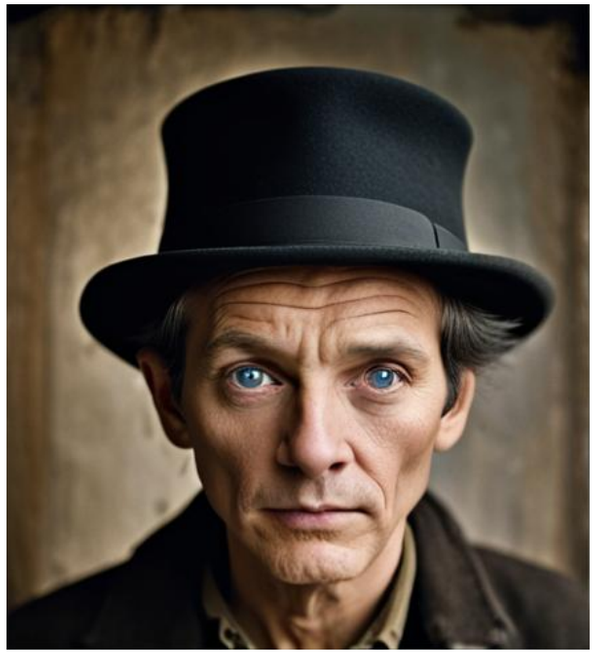
ESTRAGON:
You think all the same.
VLADIMIR:
No no, it's impossible.
…
VLADIMIR:
What is terrible is to have thought.

In an era dominated by the mirages of nationalism and communism, Beckett realized that no ideology or dogma could fully solve the problems posed by metaphysics in the same way that religion had. Beckett's allusion to communist leader Vladimir Lenin cannot be dismissed as mere irony.

Like the main character in "The Happy Days," most human beings live immersed in the quicksand of uncertainty, occasionally comforted by flashes of hope and more frequently darkened by crises of scepticism.

Godot must exist, but only as a hypothesis; if he were to appear on stage, his own existence would be called into question. At some point, Vladimir wonders if Pozzo is actually Godot, but he immediately dismisses his conjecture with horror. As with the characters in "Mercadet," Vladimir understands that a material Godeau/Godot/God will prove to be less useful than the immaterial and absent Godeau/Godot/God. Vladimir's hope works as absolute hope, i.e., as a realization forever postponed in itself.

When, towards the end of the second act, Estragon hears that Godot will not come, his reaction is to suggest to Vladimir that they commit suicide. Faith is fortified more through doubts and hopes than through certainties and realizations. Remove doubt from the wealthiest and healthiest person in the world, and they will immediately hang themselves; give hope to the weakest person, and they will risk their wealth, their health, and even their life for that hope. The characters in "Waiting for Godot" will never commit suicide because they have fully accepted the absurdity of hope. It is only hope that keeps so many men and women alive under the burden of so much misery and oppression. The resilience of Vladimir and Estragon is, in fact, more heroic than the blind despair of Lear and Romeo.



Faith is continually manifested in believing. Believe in what? Above all, in belief itself, the

most rational and yet the most illogical manifestation of the mind. Vladimir's joy is expressed when he claims Godot will certainly come, and his ennui returns every time Estragon questions it.

ESTRAGON:
He should be here.
VLADIMIR:
He didn't say for sure he'd come.
ESTRAGON:
And if he doesn't come?
VLADIMIR:
We'll come back tomorrow.
ESTRAGON:
And then the day after tomorrow.
VLADIMIR:
Possibly.
ESTRAGON:
And so on.
VLADIMIR:
The point is—
ESTRAGON:
Until he comes.
VLADIMIR:
You're merciless.

Both beggars are Pierrots, because they deeply doubt that Godot will ever come, in the same way that Pierrot doubts Columbine's love. What a contrast to Harlequin or Don Quixote, who firmly believe in the love of Colombina and Dulcinea del Toboso respectively.

According to psychological studies made during the pandemic, whoever believed in God was more likely to survive than whoever doubted God existed[38].

Logic works with facts and reason with beliefs. As Charles S. Peirce points out, we never say that a scientific conclusion is "reasonable". We reserve our reason for uncertainties that we believe may become certainties. Vladimir is obliged to rely on his reason when he considers whether he should give up living or not:

VLADIMIR:
(advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart). I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.)

[38] Upenieks L, Ellison CG. Changes in Religiosity and Reliance on God During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Protective Role Under Conditions of Financial Strain? Rev Relig Res. 2022;64(4):853-881. doi: 10.1007/s13644-022-00523-z. Epub 2023 Jan 2. PMID: 36618767; PMCID: PMC9807095.

A logical mind never believes but merely accepts facts. We do not expect scientists to believe that the volume of a cone is one-third that of the cylinder sharing its base and height, just as we do not expect a surgeon to believe whether blood circulates or not since these are demonstrable concepts and are fully accepted as such. Science's profound distrust of belief explains why any discussion of faith is rhetorical from the outset, as it is not directed at a particular subject, such as the soul, God, or love, but rather at the act of believing. Answering positively to the question of whether someone believes in love is as naive as asking a mathematician if one plus one equals three.

The question of God hovers over Beckett's play. Will he come to save the characters? Save them from what? From death? From hell? But the main concern of the characters in "Waiting for Godot" is not about the nature of Godot but rather about the faith of the characters in their own existence–a life that is never static but dynamic, fully expressed in the act of waiting. This attitude, associated by cynics with optimism–an optimism Beckett's explores in "The Happy Days", constitutes the faith that fortifies existence, from that of the first African nomad to that of the last Roman Christian, from that of the last Jew who survived Auschwitz to that of the unemployed father of three children; the survival of Beckett's characters is no less admirable, however, as they rebuild their faith from the ashes. Like Camus's Sisyphus, they survive in a world that has turned sweet religion into a collection of words; their condition, that of modern man, is certainly absurd because how can anyone believe in an existence threatened by decay, suffering from birth to the grave, without a clear awareness of their birth and death:

" Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries."

The inverted chronology of Vladimir's cry is intentional, as time itself can only exist through our beliefs:

“Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?”

Beckett, like Voltaire, believed that most people went on with their lives without realizing the absurdity of daily suffering. Both believed that some people, like Harlequin and Sancho Panza, could consequently achieve happiness more easily than others. Beckett created, as a result, the character of Winnie in “The Happy Days”, but his sensitivity didn’t allow him to make fun of her, as he first intended, according to several testimonies. The unforgettable image of a woman praising her life as her body sinks into the mud has survived as a poignant symbol of resilience:

WINNIE:
And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes – (she does so) – and wait for the day to come – (opens eyes) – the happy day to come… That is what I find so comforting when I lose heart and envy the brute beast.

Similar to the sleepless nights experienced by Agamemnon in the Iliad as he pondered his soldiers, and Don Quixote in the presence of Sancho Panza, a comparable situation occurs toward the end of "Waiting for Godot." In this scene, Vladimir, who embodies Beckett's alter-ego, grapples with insomnia while Estragon peacefully slumbers. Vladimir, with a sense of envy, then speaks of his companion:

" He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot."

Vladimir judges his suffering greater than Estragon's because he has discovered the absurdity of trying to understand everything in a world of uncertainties that only require faith.

Beckett expressed this certainty throughout his life. In "Texts for Nothing II" (1931), we read:

world world world world... nothing, but for those who will die
(de morituris nihil nisi)

And, in "What is the Word" (1990):

what is the word –
this this –

this this here –
all this this here –
folly given all this –
seeing –
folly seeing all this this here

But whether out of ignorance (e.g., Lucky) or scepticism, all the characters in "Waiting for Godot" preserve their lives. Like Aristotle and Averroes, they believe that being is better than non-being, and believing, or having faith, is better than not believing, or lacking faith, even with the certainty that such belief will never cease.

Beckett expressed this paradox in the most accomplished passages of his most tormented work.

In "The Unnamable", the third novel of his French trilogy, a torso without limbs concludes:

"… it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don’t know, I’ll never know, in the silence you don’t know, you must go on, I can’t go on, I’ll go on.”

Ontology of Love

A sociologist could trace, in the 'Poem of the Cid' and the 'Book of Good Love,' the essential traits of the medieval period in Spain. The solemn verses of the Cid reveal the respect for hierarchies, the overvaluation of honour, and the arrogance. The mocking stanzas of Buen Amor exemplify perspicacity and sensuality.

“The Book of Good Love” seems to be the creation of a fourteenth-century ex-convict: "This is the book of the Archpriest of Hita, who composed it while imprisoned by the order of Cardinal Gil, Archbishop of Toledo (Salamanca)." Time has preserved three uneven manuscripts: S, T, and G. S for the Salamanca manuscript, T for the Toledo one, and G for the one from Gayoso. The first two refer to copies preserved by two libraries, each located in the city from which the manuscript takes its name, while Gayoso was a bibliophile who preserved the third manuscript in his personal library. The municipal library of Oporto also retains folios of a fifteenth-century Portuguese translation. Using this material, the Argentine scholar María Rosa Lida de Malkiel dedicated her life to reconstructing the poem "in its definitive version[39]." Her diligence has recently been questioned by Jean Dagenais, who in 'The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture' proposes not the existence of one but three books, each distinct from the original imprecise text:

> "“The scripta S,G and T offer a radically different picture of Juan Ruiz’s Libro. Genders or numbers of nouns and modifying adjectives are confused in many lines. Subjects and verbs do not agree in person or number… This is the tendency for each copied manuscript to become more like itself. Borrowing a term from linguistics, we may call this phenomenon ‘leveling’… Without the intervention of other, opposing forces, we could imagine the Borgesian eventuality of a text in which every word was the same word[40]."

Based on his own reading of 'Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote,' Dagenais sees in every critical edition the work of an editor and in every manuscript the work of a scribe: "The process of reading leads to the production of new scripta[41]." Through the autonomous coexistence of three independent works, Dagenais resolves seemingly irresolvable discrepancies. In S 432 d, for instance, one reads:

> "[woman] ample of hips"
>
> While manuscript G states:
>
> "[woman] narrow of hair"

[39] Lida de Melkiel, M. R. (1973). Juan Ruíz: Selección del Libro de Buen Amor y Estudios Críticos. Buenos Aires, 307.
[40] Dagenais, J. (1995). *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture.* Princeton, 131-133.
[41] “The process of reading leads to the production of new scripta». Ibídem. p. 171.

However, the extent to which Dagenais's hypotheses coincide with those of classical philology can be questioned. English, French, and German critical editions of early twentieth-century Greek authors already included, in footnotes, variations from existing manuscripts. Dagenais' hypothesis, like any hypothesis, must be understood as a model that aligns understanding with its subject; making this model the subject itself constitutes an error. The coexistence of dissimilar manuscripts does not imply, ipso facto, the existence of independent texts. Juan Ruiz, like many other medieval poets, wrote to be sung or improvised by a minstrel before nobility or the common people. Existing facsimiles mainly indicate the variations that three scribes executed on an imprecise original poem in different years and distant cities. The slightly divergent texts of “The Book of Good Love” do not supplant but rather recreate, through their insertions and omissions, the work of Juan Ruiz.

The sources of “The Book of Good Love” are the stories of “The Arabian Nights” and medieval tales from the Arab and Jewish tradition in the Iberian Peninsula. Juan Ruiz translated and modified verses from the “Pamphilus,” perhaps the most-read comedy in Europe during the late Middle Ages. Like Chaucer and Boccaccio, Juan Ruiz sings the pleasures of the body to awaken the hilarity of his listeners. Laughter, unlike tears, is shared around a table. Loneliness alone begets sadness. The protagonist of “The Book of Good Love” strives incessantly to escape his solitude, to love and be loved. In the prologue of the Salamanca manuscript, Juan Ruiz confuses his purpose with that of his protagonist:

> "Lady, give me grace, give me consolation" (9c)

Which, for the medieval man, means companionship (con-solus). Buen Amor (Good Love) is a state of grace that the author yearns for. Throughout his failures, solitude emerges as the true antagonist of the poet:

> "And I, as I was alone, without company" (112a)
> "For the man who is alone always thinks of cares" (1316d)
> "Because the man who is alone, life is wretched" (1317d)
> "Since I saw myself alone and without a woman, lonely" (1331)

The apparent lack of unity in the verses of “The Book of Good Love” is not foreign to the caprices of amorous misadventures. Thus, the fear of death is already present at the beginning of the poem when the Archpriest is about to marry a beautiful maiden and reappears later, in a painful tone after the death of Trotaconventos.

In each episode of the poem, sensuality, characteristic of human nature, contends with morality, contrary to human nature. In stanzas 152 and 153, Juan Ruiz attributes his amorous weakness to the stars:

> Many are born under Venus, for whom most of their lives
> Is to love women, they never forget;
> They labour and strive very much without measure,
> But most do not get the dearest thing;
> In this sign, I believe I was born;

I always punish myself in serving the ladies I knew.
The good they did to me, I did not devalue;
To many, I served much, never finished anything (152-153).

The author, through Trotaconventos, defends the right to a woman's physical pleasure. The three scribes carefully preserved, without mutual knowledge, the thorniest episodes: the seduction of a widow, a maiden, a nun and a Moor lady, and the act of being seduced and raped by three peasant women. One can even find a justification of adultery in the story of Pitas Payas' wife. It is telling that the objections given to Trotaconventos' arguments are taken from the moral code imposed by medieval society, while Trotaconventos bases her arguments on the body's urgency to love and be loved. Throughout these episodes, it is the woman who takes centre stage and makes relevant decisions.

The sensuality of the poem has led to both explicit and discreet interpretations in Spain and Argentina. "The even more common interpretation of the “Book of Good Love,'" especially among Spanish interpreters, sees the poem as a real and truthful autobiography that, following the incidents in the life of Juan Ruiz, is either the erotic

confession of 'a Castilian tortured by overwhelming sexual appetite[42]' or 'expression of the tormenting anguish that torments the poet everywhere[43].' This extreme interpretation discards the prose prologue (…) and many other passages in which, throughout the book, Juan Ruiz insists on the didactic function of his delightful poem, a function that, in my opinion, is the cause and effect of his author choosing the literary genre of the Hispano-Hebrew maqamat, in an autobiographical form with a teaching purpose[44]."

But stating that Juan Ruiz's purpose was didactic would be redundant. The medieval man, conditioned by the letters of Saint Paul, was unable to justify, at least publicly, the playful aspect of art. Every poem, especially every comic poem, had to include didactic justification: "The medieval man encountered a barrier, in the best of cases, when it came to reading; the pleasure of reading could only be reached through the effort to attain virtue or wisdom (…) Pleasure in itself was sinful[45]." As late as 1721, Daniel Defoe still had to justify in England the educational dimension of his works in “The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders:”

> “Upon this foundation this book is recommended to the reader, as a work from every part of which something may be learned, and some just and religious inference is drawn by which the reader will have something of instruction, if he pleases to make use of it… Her application to a sober life and industrious management at last in Virginia, with her transported spouse, is a story fruitful of instruction to all the unfortunate creatures who are oblig’d to seek their re-establishment abroad[46].”

The Salamanca version includes a didactic warning in its prologue. However, unless we attribute an unlikely naiveté to the medieval man, this warning could not be more counterproductive. Through negations, the author arouses the curiosity of his listeners, who "will discard and abhor the evil ways and tricks of crazy love, which causes the loss of souls" (S: prologue). Juan Ruiz does not miss the opportunity to present his work as a manual for sinners:

> "But because sin is a human thing, if some, which I do not recommend, want to use crazy love, they will find here some ways to do it" (S: prologue).

Despite his warnings, or precisely because of them, the most celebrated episode among medieval listeners was that of the serranas, where sexuality is more explicit:

> "The mischievous shepherdess
> Said, 'let's wrestle for a while:
> Take yourself from there quickly,
> Free yourself from these clothes.'

[42] Sánchez Albornoz, C. (1956). *España, un enigma histórico,* I, 496.
[43] Alonso, D. (1957). "La cárcel de Arcipreste," *Cuadernos de Historia*, February 1957, 165-177.
[44] Lida de Melkiel, M. R. (Op. cit.). Page 341.
[45] Huizinga, J. (1996). “For medieval men the border lay, in the best of cases, right after reading; the enjoyment of reading could only be sanctified through striving for virtue or wisdom… Enjoyment per se was sinful.” *The Autumn of the Middle Ages.* Chicago, 40.
[46] Defoe, D. "The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders," The Preface.

She took me by the wrist,
Where I did whatever she wanted." (971).

Likewise, readers in the 14th and 15th centuries of the Salamanca manuscript underlined and annotated passages where Juan Ruiz refers to Ovid's Ars Amatoria and Aristotelian commentaries on sexual necessity[47].

It would be wrong, on the other hand, to reduce “The Book of Good Love” to the burlesque. Not without reason, Felix Lecoy points out that Juan Ruiz parodies the sacred stanzas of Latin by altering them[48]. However, his mockery does not target the sacred ideal but human imperfection, that is, the jargon and behaviour of medieval monks. The Pope and the bishops of Rome, as flesh-and-blood individuals, are the object of his jests:

"I saw there in Rome, where holiness is,
that they all do great humility before money" (493a-b)

This lack of empathy with the medieval popular ideology accounts for the obtuse academic interpretations of the “Book of Good Love[49].” The medieval man associated sin with redemption, and redemption with sin; Juan Ruiz, in fact, intersperses scandalous episodes with pious prayers[50]. Sin is an act destined to be overcome and condemned by the sacred, but also a necessary act before salvation.

The gargoyles of medieval churches also correspond to this conception: deformed bodies of men and animals that lurk around the sanctuary and hide or escape through its walls.

One might wonder about the incidents that led the Archpriest of Hita to prison. The final stanzas of the “Book of Good Love,” or as it was called during the Middle Ages, the “Book of the Archpriest of Hita,” include the “Song of the Clerics of Talavera” (1690-1709), in which a group of priests implores the church to allow them to have concubines. Some writers see in Juan Ruiz, from this passage onwards, a reformer[51]. Is his poem the confession of a priest involved in love scandals? Buen Amor is the love that leads to God, but this pursuit does not exclude the possibility, as Edgar Paiewonsky points out, of physical union:

[47] John. (Op. cit.). Cfr. p. 211.

[48] Lecoy, F. (1938). “Nous avons à faire à une parodie joyeuse». *Recherches sur le ‘Libro de Buen Amor',* 216.

[49] Pons, J. S. (1951). “Elle a voulu voir en son auteur un moraliste qui représentait la laideur de la nature humaine pour en inspirer l’horreur, ou, au contraire, elle s’est émue du dévergondage et de l’impiété de l’oeuvre. Oú est la verité?” "L’Archiprêtre de Hita. 'Esquisse pour un portrait'" in *Bulletin Hispanique,* May 1951, 20.

[50] Paiewonsky Conde, E. (1954). “La fiscalidad de los encuentros amorosos raya en lo grotesco y la urgente necesidad de sublimación conduce directamente a la profunda meditación sobre la pasión de Cristo”. Paiewonsky Conde, Edgar. "Polarización erótica medieval y estructura del Libro de Buen Amor" in *Bulletin Hispanique*, June 1954, 351.

“Mais il distingue fort bien l’amour bestial, le fol amour, le bon amour et l’amour pur ou spirituel (…) Juan Ruís se place au centre de l’abondance de náture”. Pons, J. S. Op. cit., 309-311.

[51] Weisser, F. (1934). "Spraliche Kuntsmittel des Erzpriester von Hita" in *Vierteljahrschrift für Kultur und Litteratur der Renaissance,* VII, 243.

“[We perceive] a flash of Juan Ruiz’s conscious subtlety. When referring to the seed, our author identifies the essence of the finite and temporal with the essence of the erotic. Man is 'thin' and 'equipped' to perform the sexual act precisely because man is the result of this act—'conceived of unclean seed.' In this way the theme of 'mad love of this world', introduced at the beginning of the second paragraph from the perspective of the soul, is expanded to encompass not only the specific sin of the sexual act, but the generic sin of life itself.[52]

[52] Paiewonsky Conde, Edgar. “[Percibimos] un destello de la consciente sutileza de Juan Ruíz. Al aludir a la simiente, nuestro autor identifica la esencia de los finito y temporal con la esencia de lo erótico. El hombre es ‘flaco’ y ‘aparejado’ a efectuar el acto sexual precisamente porque el hombre es el resultado de este acto—*‘de inmunda simiente concebido’*. De esta manera el tema del ‘amor loco d’este mundo’, introducido al comienzo del segundo párrafo desde la perspectiva del alma se ensancha para abarcar no sólo el pecado específico del acto sexual, sino el genérico de la vida misma”. (Op. cit.). Page 339.

Ontology of Crime

Being a criminal has been, since ancient times, a reprehensible act. In the Bible, Eve conspires with the serpent and Adam to steal the only apple that God forbids them to take, which triggers all evils.

The condemnation that theft and murder provoke in the law codes of the Sumerian tablets and the Code of Hammurabi of Babylon is corroborated by the fifth and seventh commandments of the Bible and various passages from the Quran. The law of retaliation, often expressed by the phrase "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," established a direct correspondence between the imposed punishment and the committed offense. The law of retaliation led to the death penalty for the murderer and the loss of hands for the rogue.

Jesus himself presents himself to his disciples as the nemesis of the murderer and the thief:

> "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." John 10:9-10

The political justification of crime

But at the same time that penalties were imposed to punish murder as a crime, a heroic vision of it arose, particularly through theft and lies, both embodiments of deceit.

Hesiod and Aeschylus present us with a messianic Prometheus who steals fire from the gods so that humanity can improve its quality of life through the development of arts and sciences. The villain of the tragedy "Prometheus Bound" is a tyrannical Zeus who resents humanity abandoning its primitive state, which in the Bible would be Eden and in Ovid the golden age. Prometheus, therefore, is the equivalent of the serpent in Genesis, which in John Milton's "Paradise Lost" is Satan himself:

> *His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,*
> *His arms clung to his ribs, his legs entwining*
> *Each other, till, supplanted, down he fell,*
> *A monstrous serpent on his belly prone,*
> *Reluctant, but in vain; a greater power*[53]

Lies and thefts appeared justified in the literature and myths of antiquity, although as stratagems to outwit the unjust, powerful oppressors, and murderers.

This shift in thinking is the cause of our permissiveness towards crime. The starting argument is the mechanism of defense. If I am attacked, it has been preached since then, I must defend myself, no matter if it is with lies and violence.

We also read in "The Odyssey" that Ulysses steals Polypheme's only eye, allowing him to escape certain death.

[53] Milton, J., & Le Comte, E. (1961). *Paradise lost, Samson Agonistes [and] Lycidas*. [New York] New American Library, 282.

In the Bible, Jacob steals his twin brother Esau's paternal blessing, allowing him to found the nation of Israel.

The oppression of the Roman Empire allows the emergence of desperate rebels and criminals like Viriato, Boudica, Spartacus, and Simon Bar Giora. The Middle Ages gave us Robin Hood, defender of the defenseless, who robs and kills in the Sherwood forests to feed the poor.

In Swiss tradition, the subversive William Tell is a national hero. The most famous story recounts how Tell refused to pay homage to the cap placed on a pole by Governor Gessler, which led to a series of events that ultimately resulted in Tell's precise shot with his crossbow, liberating his people from oppression.

Spain's eventually futile attempt to regain the American colonies it had lost during the Napoleonic occupation delivered hundreds of Independence heroes to the American nations. In Colombia, subversives against the Spanish crown like José Antonio Galán, Policarpa Salavarrieta, and Antonia Santos are now venerated as martyrs of freedom.

The false syllogism of political criminals

However, the fight against oppressive regimes is often manipulated by cunning and fanatical criminals who justify violation, theft, and murder in the history of these martyrs.

Such has been the case of many terrorists of the 20th and 21st centuries, who claim that every violent act is a protest against an oppressive regime.

An example is the terrorist from the drug trafficking group with ties to the Cartel de los Soles in Venezuela, the ELN of Colombia, Violeta Arango Ramírez, who on June 17, 2017, left a bag full of explosives in the women's bathroom on the second floor of the Andino Shopping Center in Bogotá, killing three innocent women as a "protest" against the majority vote against the peace agreement sponsored by the tyranny of Cuba between the FARC guerrilla and the Colombian State of President Santos.

The antidemocratic Violeta was captured and later released by the former terrorist Gustavo Petro, who named her a "peace promoter." Violeta was then invited to a socialist-affiliated university where, wearing the red and white checkered keffiyeh scarf, a favorite of the leaders of the Palestinian Intifada, she said to a stunned nation that being a terrorist is "a life option" for "those over 15 years old," "following international laws."

Her syllogism, like that of many self-proclaimed terrorists endorsed by their political intentions, is as follows:

1. Violence is justified against an oppressive regime
2. Any regime that allows private property is oppressive.
3. Therefore, any act of violence is justified in non-socialist nations.

The main fallacy here is in premise 2, where a broad generalization is made by stating that "any regime allowing private property is oppressive." This assertion is a hasty generalization, as not all regimes allowing private property are necessarily oppressive.

There is a variety of political and economic systems that allow private property without automatically being oppressive, such as:

Mixed Economy, which combines elements of a market economy with government interventions to correct inequalities and ensure social welfare. Private property remains a central component but is balanced with regulations and social policies.

Social Capitalism, which promotes private property but emphasizes social responsibility and equitable wealth distribution. Companies may exist in private hands but are expected to contribute positively to society.

Regulated Market Economy, a market economy where the government establishes regulations to prevent abuses and protect consumers. Private property is present, but the state intervenes to ensure fair play.

Cooperativism, where companies are collectively owned, and employees share ownership and decision-making, fostering private property in a collective and democratic sense.

Additionally, the conclusion (premise 3) that "every act of violence is justified in nations that are not socialist" does not necessarily follow from the previous premises and is an unsupported extrapolation. Even if we accept the premise that violence may be justified against an oppressive regime, it does not automatically mean that any act of violence is valid in any context.

It is sufficient to mention that the kidnapping of babies (Hamas style) and the violation of virgins are not supported by any civilized ideology. They are the modern equivalent of cannibalism.

Nations that bribe terrorists

Having said this, from the perspective of Realpolitik, developed states, driven by their neocolonialist ideology (which we will analyze later), aim to prevent any dissent. They do so by appearing as participatory democracies that care for the well-being of their citizens, especially those who could pose

a threat to their stability and existence.

Therefore, some developed states offer subsidies to those who do not work, whether due to unemployment or due to idleness. This is to avoid being labeled as "oppressors," regardless of whether such unemployment or lack of resources is due to exclusion or sheer laziness.

However, this ideology destabilizes the world order, as it encourages illegal immigration in search of such privileges while highlighting the inequality among inhabitants of different nations.

The promoted inequality is hypocritically endorsed by colluding with terrorism in nations that lack permanent unemployment subsidies. It is presupposed that acts of violence are valid there because their inhabitants lack the privileges of wealthy nations. Nevertheless, these wealthier nations continue to impact the economies of such countries with usurious interests and regulations that hinder their growth, as we have already outlined.

The Colombian case: A dangerous experiment

The current President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, proposed a program of monthly subsidies of three hundred dollars for young people at risk of being co-opted by criminal groups. This program, called "Youth in Peace," has been widely criticized by the opposition, considering it an incentive to crime.

The program prioritizes young people who have already committed crimes, which could discourage social reintegration. The program is too costly and could be used to finance illegal armed groups. The program sends the wrong message to society, which could be interpreted as legitimizing violence[54].

I myself reported in the media being pursued by a group of paramilitaries associated with Petro, wielding knives, in 2015, after criticizing Petro in one of my documentaries, which I did not finish due to threats to its protagonists.

The Colombian case is a dangerous experiment that already has disastrous consequences for the country, as analyzed by the English newspaper *Financial Times*[55]. Petro's failed policies have also been disapproved of by other Latin American countries, where violence and organized crime are widespread.

Petro's program presented a series of evident risks:

- Risk of incentivizing crime: The program could discourage the social reintegration of young people who have committed crimes, as it provides them with income without the need to work, potentially leading more young people to engage in criminal activities.

- Risk of financing illegal armed groups: The program is funded with public funds, which could be used to finance illegal armed groups, aggravating Colombia's violence problem.

[54] Reynoso, L. (2023, julio 11). Pagar para no matar: El gobierno de Gustavo Petro defiende su programa para alejar a los jóvenes de la violencia. El País. https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2023-07-11/pagar-para-no-matar-el-gobierno-de-gustavo-petro-defiende-su-programa-para-alejar-a-los-jovenes-de-la-violencia.html

[55] https://www.ft.com/content/e6612778-2a6c-4dd7-aba5-18d1bcd0d69b

- Risk of legitimizing violence: The program sends the wrong message to society, which can be interpreted as legitimizing violence, potentially leading to increased violence in the country.

There are alternatives to Petro's program that could be more effective and less risky. These alternatives include:

- Social reintegration programs: These programs provide young people who have committed crimes with the tools and support they need to reintegrate into society.

- Violence prevention programs: These programs focus on addressing the factors that lead to crime, such as poverty, lack of opportunities, and inequality.

It is important for the Colombian government to consider these alternatives before implementing Petro's program. A well-designed program could help reduce violence in the country, but a poorly designed one could have disastrous consequences.

The Critical Case of the Roman Empire

In the late 4th and early 5th centuries, the Roman Empire was in deep crisis. The Empire's borders were being invaded by barbarian peoples, and the economy was declining.

In this context, Roman rulers began paying barbarian peoples not to invade their territories. The goal was to maintain peace and avoid war.

In the year 406, the Vandals, Goths, and Suebi crossed the Rhine River and entered the Roman Empire. The Romans, unable to stop them, decided to pay them to withdraw.

The barbarians received large amounts of gold and silver but did not withdraw. Instead, they settled in the Empire and began demanding more land and privileges.

In the year 410, the Vandals, led by Alaric, sacked Rome. This event marked the beginning of the end of the Western Roman Empire.

The barbarian peoples continued to invade the Roman Empire, gradually taking control of its territories. In the year 476, the last Roman Emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the barbarian king Odoacer.

Paying gold to the barbarian peoples was a decision that had disastrous consequences for the Roman Empire. The gold paid to the barbarians could have been used to strengthen the Empire's army and defenses, but instead, it was used to buy temporary peace.

This decision also sent the wrong message to the barbarians and contributed to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

A peaceful world ruled by thugs

In both scenarios, the middle class suffered the most. While plutocrats had the ability to shift their capital from one nation to another, demagogues incited hatred and resentment among the poor and rural classes to maintain power, as exemplified by Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

Examples of political persecution in these so-called socialist countries further illustrate the consequences of such power dynamics. Dissidents, activists, and individuals critical of the ruling regimes in these nations often face persecution, imprisonment, and censorship. For instance, in Cuba, political dissidents like Oswaldo Payá and Guillermo

Fariñas have faced harassment and imprisonment for their opposition to the government. Similarly, in Venezuela, opposition figures like Leopoldo López have been arrested and subjected to house arrest, and the media has faced censorship.

These instances highlight how the manipulation of class dynamics and the concentration of power can lead to the suppression of dissent and the violation of basic human rights. In addition to becoming the object of class hatred, the middle class suffers the effort of being honest and decent, or, to use Marxist language, the burden of the yoke of bourgeois morality.

A world of peace ruled by bullies

The truth that no philosopher or journalist has had the courage to sing to the world is that we are a world of peaceful majorities ruled by bullies. From the moment a child is abandoned in their kindergarten by their parents, we subject humanity to a world where the most violent surreptitiously impose themselves. Evidence of this is that in the 21st century, after the pacifist speeches of Jesus, Buddha, and Gandhi, the world continues

to witness wars among siblings; evidence of this is that weaponry remains the largest industry in the world, with the consequence that the very producers of weaponry promote these wars.

Evidence of this is the variety and diversity of armed groups preaching to act in the name of peace, love, class struggle; the superiority of a race, nation, religious creed, or any other discourse constantly refuted by the faculties of philosophy in the world, not to mention common sense.

The world in which we live is made up of 80% noble and peaceful people who live at the mercy of 10% governing them and another 10% disputing that governance through weapons. This 80% is the salt of the earth, those who forgive and withstand the onslaught of the world's Cains, those who adhere to the precepts inherited from saints and prophets, not out of ignorance or fear, but out of a desire to live and renounce death.

When we observe the movements of history, its falls, declines, wars, and revolutions, we notice that those who survive are those who renounce violence, not those who exercise it. And it's not only the likes of Alexanders, Silas, Marius, Julius Caesars, Pompeys, Neros, and Hitlers who die defeated by the very iron they wielded, but also the Spartacuses, Viriatos, Budicas, Che Guevaras, and anonymous soldiers.

War is metaphysically counterproductive because it is based on the elimination of the same human species with which we intend to coexist. Those who base it in the name of preventive actions or the need to end a tyrant, they renounce the supreme force that regulates history, the same force that allows the majority of humanity to survive day by day.

Those who object that I am speculating illusions do not know the history of so many families that have survived wars and revolutions under the precept of renouncing violence, bullying, and dishonesty. Mel Gibson portrays one of these stories in "Hacksaw Ridge" (2016). This movie is based on the true story of an American soldier and conscientious objector during World War II. Desmond Doss, played by Andrew Garfield, enlists in the army but refuses to carry weapons or kill due to his personal beliefs as a Seventh-day Adventist and his conviction of not taking lives. Despite facing discrimination and skepticism from his fellow soldiers and superiors, Doss remains steadfast in his commitment to serve as a combat medic and help save lives instead of taking them. The film focuses on the Battle of Okinawa, where Doss rescues more than 75 wounded soldiers under enemy fire, protected by a force that soldiers consider divine or supernatural.

I have also chronicled the miraculous protection I have received along my life, publishing these pages under the threat of powerful forces, such as the Vatican and the Illuminati, due to my steadfast rejection of anger, hate or revenge, in my novel “The Invisible Prophet[56]”.

The ancient precepts enshrined in sacred books, those of being protected by a God who rewards the righteous and punishes the intrigants and violent, abound and are real, but they have been silenced by a modernity eager for skepticism and transcendental selfishness. Assuming that man controls not only his life but also the destiny of history and nations has been refuted time and again by diseases, cataclysms, and the fall of empires and ideological projects that assured, like builders of the Tower of Babel, to be the socio-political solution of the world; for example, the Pax Romana, which legalized

[56] Santander Ferreira, H. N. (2022). *The Invisible Prophet*. Stanley.

slavery, as well as the sugar plantations in Virginia and Carolina in the United States, the scam and the Spanish encomienda, the socialist nationalism of Mussolini and Hitler, the tyranny of the proletariat in the USSR, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, not to mention European colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

It is only when the middle class achieves power through a democracy that allows freedom of the press and expression, as in the United States and France or England, that societies allow themselves peace and prosperity.

The Precariat

Unprotected and scorned, incapable of exerting violence, either out of religious fear or humanistic convictions, middle-class professionals plunge into a helpless impotence; these are the people whom Guy Standing calls The Precariat[57].

Their condition is considerably more unstable than that of the old proletarians. The Precariat lacks roots, representation, or defense, lacking the ability to secure a home or aspire to start a family, and often without family support.

The precariat does not adhere to traditional social class categories; it can include executives who have left their companies, middle-class professionals, and, of course, workers from the working class. All of them, especially women, are exposed to falling into the clutches of precarity.

This phenomenon has been shaped by the mercantilist and liberal system, applauded by both capitalists and progressives, leading us to a post-industrial, globalized, technologized, and connected world. A world that, on the one hand, allows labor exploitation in certain parts of the world and, on the other hand, plunges the rest into a sea of insecurities.

Unlike the proletariat, which enjoyed certain privileges such as labor agreements, access to housing, opportunities for growth within the company, recognition for seniority, and retirement, the precariat lacks these benefits. Their reality fluctuates between having and not having a job, and even when they have one, it implies the arduous task of continuously searching for work. This constant effort not only involves an investment of time and money but also entails anguish, frustration, and low self-esteem. The danger lies in the fact that the misadvised precariat may erupt in rage or fall into the rhetoric of the far right, as seen in the rise of xenophobic parties across Europe.

To curb this trend, Standing proposes transforming the precariat into a political movement capable of defending its rights, similar to the old labor unions.

It is noteworthy that The Precariat is described in terms akin to those Bauman uses to describe liquid modernity and Byung-Chul Han's society of fatigue.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) in the era of AI

More appropriate would be the implementation of a universal basic income for those without criminal records, capable of providing the security that the welfare state once offered, which would ease tensions and guide citizens' time management towards their well-being and happiness.

[57] Standing, G. (2013). *El precariado, una nueva clase social.* Pasado & Presente.

This argument is valid since UBI can help reduce the stress and anxiety that may arise from economic uncertainty. By providing people with a level of economic security, UBI can free them to focus on their personal development and social participation.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the global economy. Machines are learning to perform tasks that were previously done by humans, leading to increased unemployment and inequality. In this context, Universal Basic Income (UBI) emerges as a possible solution to ensure citizens' economic security and reduce social tensions.

UBI is an unconditional income paid to all citizens, regardless of their employment or economic situation. It is a social protection system based on the idea that all human beings have the right to a minimum standard of living, regardless of their circumstances.

UBI has several potential advantages in the AI era. Firstly, it can help reduce unemployment. By providing citizens with a basic income, UBI can free them from the pressure to work in jobs that can be automated. This can lead to increased productivity and innovation as people will have more time for education, personal development, and creating new businesses.

Secondly, UBI can help reduce inequality. By providing all citizens with a basic income, UBI can help level the playing field and reduce wealth and opportunity gaps. This can contribute to creating a fairer and more equitable society.

Thirdly, UBI can help improve citizens' well-being and happiness. By providing people with a level of economic security, UBI can reduce stress and anxiety. This can lead to improved physical and mental health, as well as increased social and civic engagement.

Of course, UBI also presents some challenges. Firstly, it is important to find a way to fund it. Secondly, a system needs to be designed that is fair and does not discourage work.

In an age that underscores the shortcomings of socialism and signals the resurgence of a free-market economy, the concept of Universal Basic Income (UBI) emerges as a compelling proposition. It advocates for the implementation of a Universal Tax on Overwhelming Wealth (UTOW), proposing that individuals or companies generating profits exceeding 1000% annually should have the option to channel their surplus earnings towards the well-being of humanity, specifically allocated to fund the UBI. Those opting out of this philanthropic initiative would be publicly listed, allowing social media and journalists the freedom to track and scrutinize the allocation of their additional income. This proposal seeks to leverage the successes of a free-market economy while emphasizing corporate social responsibility and transparency in the distribution of wealth for the collective benefit of society.

In the AI era, UBI will be an essential tool to ensure citizens' economic security and reduce social tensions

Crime, root of existential nausea

The acceptance of crime as a byproduct of social imperfections has led us to such a crossroads. How much simpler it would be to isolate the dishonest and violent in prisons and separate them from honest citizens! Such is the achievement of President Bukele in El Salvador that keeps the world breathless today. His effort is not new; strict social order is characteristic of nations like China and Singapore, where the criminal cannot escape

punishment with money, NGOs advocating for their rights, or legal subterfuges like self-designating as a "peace manager" or guerrilla.

The liberality of the 1960s, the result of struggles for civil rights, awakened spaces of permissiveness that bandits knew how to take advantage of. For instance, the opening of the United States in 1980 to Cuban immigrants during the Mariel exodus, an opportunity that Fidel Castro seized to send his most dangerous criminals to Florida. Before the exodus, Fidel Castro released a large number of prisoners and mentally ill individuals, whom he embarked and sent to the United States. Cuba thus exported thousands of individuals with criminal records, who immediately engaged in criminal activities, as depicted in the movie Scarface (Palma, 1982).

Preferring to live in peace over being violent

As heroic as the feats of revolutionaries might be, history has shown that those who renounce violence are the ones who best enjoy their lives and have a long and healthy existence.

When the Colombian socialist conglomerate rose up against President Iván Duque in 2021, with young people hired to vandalize banks and commercial premises, murder police officers, and set up illegal blockades interrupting the arrival of provisions to cities, the professors from the most affordable university in Colombia, UNIMINUTO, my colleagues whom I had only known virtually due to the pandemic confinement, had decided in a bloc to support the guerrilla violence. I was the only one left to consult, and they hadn't done so because they knew my stance against socialist demagoguery and guerrilla violence, causing kidnappings, violations, and extortions throughout Colombia.

One of them then wrote in our WhatsApp group that he hoped the police who were "massacring the youth" would die by divine action.

"Like anyone who murders another viciously," I replied.

"Even if they kill a policeman for freedom?"

"Whoever lives by the sword, dies by the sword," I replied, quoting the gospel.

"What do you propose then?" intervened a third.

"To act like St. Francis of Assisi," I said. "And sing to God 'Make me an instrument of your peace.'"

The third teacher wrote in crude terms that St. Francis was a hypocrite who had allowed the Inquisition to burn heretics while preaching.

My next refutation was so obvious, that blaming his Colombian ancestors for not stopping the Nazi Holocaust from Colombia would be as absurd, but the oldest teacher, who from the shadows endorsed that bellicose stance and organized those arguments, interrupted the chat with a light-hearted joke: "D... the Inquisitor!"

It is worth mentioning that one of the teachers attacking me posted photos with weapons and stones, evidencing his violent participation in those disturbances where dozens of police officers and innocent civilians died. A year later, confirming my words, that violent person inexplicably woke up dead in his bed.

After such refutation of the violent ones, my students asked me about my stance in an online class. I knew that my response was being recorded online and would be transmitted to all UNIMINUTO teachers in the nation, including high authorities.

I replied with the arguments mentioned above, advising that we leave the fight of violence to the violent ones, whether they be guerrillas and military or protesting youth and vandals because they are the ones who, if we analyze history, ultimately suffer for their excesses. One who robs and kills never forgets that they are a criminal, just as the one who renounces killing or theft never forgets that they are honest, and it is that memory of the past that gives tranquility or restlessness not only to the quiet days that make up the bulk of life but also to sleep, one third of our life, as described by Shakespeare in Macbeth.

I added that our duty was to study and therefore, we would continue with our normal classes. My comment was an irony against the other teachers who had turned their classes into spaces for demagogic debates.

I addressed all the concerns of the class, and we had a normal class in the midst of that climate of armed struggle. In the subsequent weeks, the teachers at UNIMINUTO tried to frame me with hoaxes that chance blatantly unmasked. On one occasion, the conspirators' microphone remained open, and I clearly heard the voice of a teacher giving instructions to a student about what to tell me. Immediately, I reported the situation to the authorities, with the result that instead of supporting me, they ignored my email and tried

to frame me with a falsely offended student, prosecuting me with a young priest they considered the most intelligent of the Eudist order. When I asked who had reported my class, that prelate couldn't express himself. A few months later my work contract ended, and, understandably, it was not renewed. What I fought against in that institution throughout 2021 was an ideological battle in which my triumph, heralded by the arguments described in this book, was a hard pill for the powerful in the shadows to swallow.

When I asked who had denounced me, that prelate could not express himself. I presumed that in my nervousness before his authority I couldn't ask who he was making the accusation for! A few months later my employment contract ended and, understandably, it was not renewed.

What I fought at UNIMINUTO throughout 2021 was an ideological battle in which the triumph of the arguments described in this book was a difficult pill to swallow for the powerful directors who, from the shadows, made secret pacts with the violent factions. I was fired from UNIMINUTO with no valid reason one year later.

But, is this the destiny of humanity from the start? Unable to express oneself independently for fear of retaliation from mafias that organize their ideology from directives imposed by their leaders, as I have witnessed and suffered first-hand in most of the public and private institutions where I have worked in 3 continents?"

The answer is negative if we consider the archaeological discoveries that demonstrate the peaceful coexistence, some sixty thousand years ago, of Homo sapiens with the Neanderthal man.

The ancestry of the Neanderthal man

In my book of historical stories "Ciphered History[58]," challenging the traditional notions of the inferiority of extinct species, I justify the superiority of the Neanderthal man over Homo sapiens.

The narrative of seventy thousand years of peaceful coexistence between Homo sapiens and Neanderthals reveals a harmonious cohabitation, where both groups shared beliefs and rituals and resolved territorial disputes peacefully, guided by a priori universal laws.

Homo sapiens, on its path to agriculture, initially disregarded the nomadic lifestyle of the Neanderthals. However, adversities like crops ruined by natural disasters compelled Homo sapiens to embrace their ancient way of life again. This led to curious situations, such as young Homo sapiens becoming apprentices of Neanderthal men.

The story takes a dark turn when Ka-Nin, son of Ad-Kan, incited by his wife Li-veth, decided to murder his brothers intending to seize his family's territories.

This audacious act triggered a wave of violence among Homo sapiens, leading the peaceful Neanderthals to an existential crossroad.

Not content with taking over vast territories, Ka-Nin surrounded them with stones, announcing that he would kill any Neanderthal hunter who entered. No Neanderthal believed his words until the following month when his spear killed fifty of their hunters, who, unable to believe such cruelty, perished without resistance.

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[58] Santander Ferreira, H. N., & PETRUS ROMANUS. (2022). *Historia Cifrada: Especulaciones históricas.* Editorial Stanley.

The Neanderthals summoned their poets, who, after deep reflection, concluded that self-immolation was preferable to living in a world dominated by fear of murder.

The Neanderthals' End

In the embrace of death, sweet liberation,
From endless battles that lie ahead,
Peace claims its tranquil wisdom,
Away from the clamor, the roar, the dread.

Oh, death is a yawn, not a wound,
Where conflicts find relief in its breath.
There'll be no valiant souls or cowards,
No slaves to lament, nor bloody heroes.

Our lineage shall fade into the night,
Like the light in this wintry dusk.
Serene, awakening dreams,

In the gods' courtyard, their seed and call,
We'll forsake riches, hope, and salt,
God-favored for forsaking evil's thrall.

This tragic episode marked the end of the Neanderthals, with Ka-Nin becoming their exterminator and the first killer of his own kind. The extinction of the Neanderthals, therefore, was not an act of inferiority but

resistance against the emerging barbarity in Homo sapiens.

The fear of crime and violence that Homo sapiens suffer from is, therefore, an inheritance from those dark days. The Hebrew poets synthesized the extermination of the Neanderthals with the myth of Cain and Abel, and attributed its precedent to the sin of Li-veth, whom the Hebrew amanuensis called first Lilith and then Eve, while the Greeks represented it in the Pandora's fall.

> " Zeus swore revenge. He ordered Hephaestus to make a clay woman, and the four Winds to breathe life into her, and all the goddesses to adorn her. This woman, Pandora, the most beautiful ever created, Zeus sent as a gift to Epimetheus, but Epimetheus, having been warned by his brother to accept no gift from Zeus, respectfully excused himself... Epimetheus, alarmed by his brother's fate, hastened to marry Pandora, whom Zeus had made as foolish, mischievous, and idle as she was beautiful. Presently she opened a jar, which Prometheus had warned Epimetheus to keep closed, and in which he had been at pains to imprison all the Spites that might plague mankind: such as Old Age, Labour, Sickness, Insanity, Vice and Passion. Out these flew in a cloud, stung Epimetheus and Pandora and then attacked the race of mortals. Delusive Hope, however, whom Prometheus had also shut in the jar, discouraged them by her lies from a general suicide[59]."

It is Hesiod who prescribes that it is thanks to false hope that our species has not committed collective suicide.

Hope is an evil for men,
For it makes them hope for things that will never happen.

Therefore, were the Neanderthals not more lucid in accepting their death instead of being accomplices or victims of the fear and suffering that Eve and Cain have subjected us to since then? As seen in the chapter on waiting, Samuel Beckett's literature takes up the sad value of false hope, the deferred belief in a better tomorrow that perhaps, who knows, who cares, may never come.

The Mayans, worshippers of Suicide

The most plausible hypothesis for the extinction of Mayan culture in Central America would obey a lucidity similar to that of the Neanderthals. Their cult to Ixtab, the protector goddess of suicides, corroborates this hypothesis; without fear of the afterlife and firmly believing that paradise also houses those who decide to renounce a world contaminated by crime, deceit, and lies, the builders of the pyramids of Central America committed collective suicide two centuries before the imminent arrival of the Spanish conquerors that their astrologers predicted.

The Mayans, a peaceful and prosperous civilization, faced the threat of Spanish conquest. The Mayans, like many pre-Columbian cultures, preserved myths or legends

[59] Graves, R. (1984). *Greek myths.* London: Penguin Books, 49.

of immigrants of Caucasian appearance from an extinct continent between America and Europe, probably the extinct Atlantis that Plato describes in detail in his dialogues.

Their knowledge of astrology and other sciences that the West today considers, not without arrogance, hidden, foretold the arrival of the Spaniards, a violent and warlike people who would bring war and destruction.

This hypothesis is supported by Moctezuma's prudent attitude towards Cortez, who, unlike his impulsive brother Cuauhtémoc, preferred dialogue and negotiation over confrontation. Moctezuma followed the precepts of his astrologers, who predicted the imminent end of his empire and Spanish dominance. Instead of leading his people to death on the battlefield, Moctezuma peacefully ceded his throne to a new king, which earned him contempt and eventually his death. Moctezuma's self-sacrifice allies him with spiritual heroes like Socrates and Jesus Christ, the subject of my theatre play “Cortés/Marina & Moctezuma: Theater play for two actors[60].”

The Mayan priests, aware that their civilization could not resist the Spaniards, embraced collective suicide. In an act of disdain for the incoming order, the Mayans chose to die in peace rather than live under the yoke of the Spaniards.

The collective suicide of the Mayans was a tragic event but also an act of courage and dignity.

I delve further into this dilemma in my book "Encripted History."

Schopenhauer's Detachment from Life

Schopenhauer is considered a pessimistic philosopher due to his Buddhist studies and his appreciation of Christianity as a manifestation of detachment from life itself. Despite the slogans of so many Christian churches celebrating Christianity with optimism, it is evident that Schopenhauer's position was more Christian than what modern Christians preach.

Schopenhauer believed that life was the thing-in-itself, that imperceptible inner world that manages the threads of existence. According to him, life is not interested in individual existence but its eternal manifestation on earth, and for that, it relies on our optimistic credulity.

Nietzsche, Socrates' Emulator

Nietzsche refuted, not without arguments, the validity of a philosophy that historically denied life to announce that its truth lay in its denial. His acid criticism against Socrates, who, like the wise Neanderthals, preferred to die rather than live in a society of deceit and injustice, arouses both our admiration and paradoxical rejection today.

Nietzsche himself exemplifies the fate of those geniuses who, possessing the truth, are scorned by a society of nepotism and complicity, which, preferring the rhetorical and deceiving sophist over the poet who proclaims truth succinctly, condemns the latter to exile and ostracism. His fate as a German was the same as Cordelia, the disrespected daughter of King Lear, who instead of praising her nation's history by announcing an impending empire, as Hegel did in his "Philosophy of Spirit," devoted himself to

[60] Santander-Ferreira, H. N. (2021). *Cortés/Marina & Moctezuma: Theater play for two actors.* Stanley.

denouncing German anti-Semitism and nationalism, enemies of the individual genius that his Übermensch advocated.

Shakespeare's Ennui

Shakespeare, through his works, frequently explored the theme of disillusionment and rejection of the world. In addition to "Hamlet," which we have already analyzed, there are other notable passages that express this sentiment:

> "Life is but a shadow that passes, a poor actor strutting and fretting his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." - Macbeth.

> "Oh, villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and, since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself.” - Othello.

"Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die." - Richard III.

These passages reveal a pessimistic and critical vision of the world, but such a perception is typical of desperado criminals, who justify their crimes by the apparent uselessness of life.

Leopardi

Giacomo Leopardi, in his work "To Myself," also expressed a profound disenchantment with life and society. In his verses, Leopardi reflects on the vanity of human aspirations and the transience of happiness. His poetry reveals an existential melancholy, similar to that found in Shakespeare's writings.

In a single verse, Leopardi describes the vanity of human aspirations:

> *Veder che tutto è vano altro che il duolo*[61].
> *Seeing that everything is in vain other than the pain.*

Leopardi also believes that happiness is a fleeting illusion that should be sacrificed for the benefit of others, as Philippides did expiring after announcing to Athens the victory of Marathon:

> *"Life is a misery, its best is to throw it away gloriously and for the good of others and of the country, what pleasure is there in an idle life preserved with such care? How come dangers are avoided?* [62]

Voltaire

In his novel "Candide," Voltaire satirizes the optimistic belief that this is the "best of all possible worlds." The novel tells the story of Candide, a naive young man who is expelled from his home by his tutor, Pangloss, an optimistic philosopher who believes that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Throughout his journey, Candide experiences life's suffering and injustice. He sees war, poverty, sickness, and death. By the end of his journey, Candide has learned that the world is an imperfect place and that happiness is an evanescent illusion. In fact, suffering and persecution appears to be the remedy to ennui:

> "«I would like to know which is worse, or to be raped a hundred times by black pirates, to have one buttock cut off, to be beaten by the Bulgarians, to be whipped and hanged in an auto-da fé, to be dissected, to row in galley, to finally

[61] Leopardi, Giacomo (1927). *Canti di Giacomo Leopardi.* Bologna, Capelli.

[62] Ibídem. *"La vita è una miseria, il suo meglio è gittarla gloriosamente e pel bene altrui e della patria, che piacere si prova in una vita oziosa conservata con tanta cura ? Come mai si fuggono i pericoli?"* 279.

> experience all the miseries through which we have all gone, or to stay here doing nothing? "That's a big question, » said Candide[63]."

His novel is an effort to mock the premise demonstrated by Leibnitz, that we live in the "best of all possible worlds; however, the conclusions of Pangloss, Leibnitz's alter ego, prevail at the end of the story:

> "The whole small society joined in this laudable design; everyone began to exercise their talents. The small land brought in a lot. Cunégonde was, in truth, very ugly; but she became an excellent pastry chef; Embroidered Paquette; the old woman took care of the linen. There was not even Brother Giroflée who did not render service; he was a very good carpenter, and even became an honest man; and Pangloss sometimes said to Candide: "All the events are linked in the best of all possible worlds: because finally if you had not been kicked out of a beautiful castle with great kicks in the behind for the love of Mademoiselle Cunégonde , if you had not been put in the Inquisition, if you had not run across America on foot, if you had not given the baron a good blow with your sword, if you had not lost all your sheep from the good country of El Dorado, you would not eat candied citrons and pistachios here." "That is well said," replied Candide[64]."

Christianity and its Metaphysics of Suffering

It is in this Neanderthal-like disdain for an existence contaminated by crime that both ancient philosophies and elaborate theologies converge. When Jesus of Nazareth announced that his kingdom was not of this world, his teaching prioritized death over the world's crimes. Clement of Alexandria, quoted by Robert Graves, recounts that, according to the Apocryphal Gospel of the Egyptians, Jesus preached that he had come into the world so that no woman would conceive again, and so that there would be no gender distinctions:

> "In *The Gospel according to the Egyptians,* when Shelom asked the Lord, "How long shall death prevail?" He answered, "So long as you women bear

[63] Voltaire (2012*).* "«]e voudrais savoir lequel est le pire, ou d'être violée cent fois par des pirates nègres, d'avoir une fesse coupée, de passer par les baguettes chez les Bulgares, d'être fouetté et pendu dans un auto-da-fé, d'être disséqué, de ramer en galère, d'éprouver enfin toutes les misères par lesquelles nous avons tous passé, ou bien de rester ici à ne rien faire ? — C'est une grande question», dit Candide." *Candide ou L'optimisme.* Libro, 83.

[64] Ibidem. "Toute la petite société entra dans ce louable dessein; chacun se mit à exercer ses talents. La petite terre rapporta beaucoup. Cunégonde était, à la vérité, bien laide; mais elle devint une excel¬ lente pâtissière; Paquette broda; la vieille eut soin du linge. Il n'y eut pas jusqu'à frère Giroflée qui ne rendît service ; il fut un très bon menuisier, et même devint honnête homme ; et Pangloss disait quelquefois à Candide: «Tous les événements sont enchaînés dans le meilleur des mondes possibles : car enfin si vous n'aviez pas été chassé d'un beau château à grands coups de pied dans le derrière pour l'amour de mademoiselle Cunégonde, si vous n'aviez pas été mis à l'Inquisition, si vous n'aviez pas couru l'Amérique à pied, si vous n'aviez pas donné un bon coup d'épée au baron, si vous n'aviez pas perdu tous vos moutons du bon pays d'Eldorado, vous ne mangeriez pas ici des cédrats confits et des pistaches. — Cela est bien dit, répondit Candide," 85.

children... When you women have trampled on the garment of shame and when the two become one, and when the male with the female is neither male nor female... I have come to destroy the works of the Female [65]"

It was the detachment from a world where kings and emperors maintained their power by the sword, with threats of death, that inspired the heroic acts of Christian martyrs, who embraced the ultimate sacrifice for love of their savior.

Contrary to what many clever writers have preached, the Christian martyr does not suffer and die to secure a privileged place in paradise; it is not, as Commander Barbara in George Bernard Shaw's work advocates, to accept heaven's bribe, but to suffer for others, just as Jesus did on the cross.

Suffering for others, just as Jesus did on the cross

Christianity, therefore, responds to Job's plea in the Old Testament, why does a just man suffer misfortunes? Because the love of the just towards humanity is such that they assume the crimes of others.

This philosophy is seen in nature itself; the deer and the zebra die so that the lion may live, without any of their relatives plotting revenge or punishment against the beasts. That is why Christ is also presented as the Lamb of God.

At this point, it is pertinent to share my mystical experience as well. At the age of 8, I jumped from a moving car and died for half an hour. I approached God in an ecstasy that became more glorious every second, knowing that by leaving my body, I would die; I was not afraid and

"Look at those women," a voice in which I recognized God said to me.

I saw women from many nations suffering, simply because they were unaware of the delights that awaited them after their death.

"Do you want to go back to help them or do you want to stay?"

"How can I not help them?" I replied. "What is a life of a hundred years compared to eternity?"

So I returned; the absence of those spiritual delights returned to my body, and I began to cry, regretting having renounced paradise, even if only temporarily.

Then I returned to life, crying, a victim of dizziness that kept me bedridden for a month.

Such an experience is akin to that of thousands of saints, seers, mystics, and sages; I have even glimpsed it in theatrical performances, when the principle of individuation dissolves and both actors and spectators become one.

Let's briefly remember some Saints who, emulating Christ, assumed martyrdom and suffering for the redemption of the world's criminals.

Saints and martyrs who suffered for others

[65] Clement of Alexandria. (Stromata, iii.). “In *The Gospel according to the Egyptians,* when Shelom asked the Lord, "How long shall death prevail?" He answered, "So long as you women bear children... When you women have trampled on the garment of shame and when the two become one, and when the male with the female is neither male nor female... I have come to destroy the works of the Female" Graves, R. (1946). *King Jesus* (p. 6).

1. Saint Stephen, considered the first Christian martyr; tradition holds that he was violated and stoned for proclaiming his faith in Jesus. The precept of Christ to love one's neighbor and enemy as oneself converges in Stephen, a martyr of morals and unwanted pleasure, inspiring mystical homoerotic iconography (a vox populi secret) in painters of various eras and schools.

2. Saint Peter, one of the apostles closest to Jesus; the first one chosen and the first to accept leaving his family and job, "to fish for men."

According to The Acts of Peter, when the apostle founder of the Church of Christ fled Rome, he had a vision:

"As he was going out of the gate, he saw the Lord entering Rome. <And as soon> as he saw him, he said: 'Lord, why are you here?'

The Lord said to him: 'I am going to Rome to be crucified.'

Peter said to him: 'Lord, are you going to be crucified again?'

"He said to him: 'Yes, Peter, I am going to be crucified again.'

When Peter came to himself and saw the Lord returning to heaven, he himself turned back to Rome, rejoicing and glorifying the Lord because he himself had told him: 'I am going to be crucified'; 'this was going to happen to Peter [66].'"

Peter, who had already denied his savior three times and would not deny him a fourth, returned to be arrested and crucified upside down, a sign of repentance for new Christians. The anecdote was incorporated, with some variation, into 20th-century culture with the Hollywood golden age film "Quo Vadis" (LeRoy, 1951), based on the novel of the same name by Henryk Sienkiewicz.

His voluntary sacrifice and that of Saint Paul, founding ideologue of Christianity, consolidated the Roman Church that is now the Vatican. Nero interrupted his persecution of Christians after ominous divine signs following the death of Saint Peter.

The identity of Jesus as Peter and Paul derives from the gospels, where Jesus affirms that the Father lives in him, and he in the father. Both the saints and the martyrs are dwelling places of the Risen Jesus, who in his immortality communes with each of them, an act not only evident to the believer in the miracles they perform, but also in their teachings, in their writings and statements.

3. Saint Paul, apostle and evangelist. The apocryphal book of the Acts of Paul presents the same appearance of Saint Peter to the apostle Paul.

"At that moment the Lord approached him, walking on the sea. He nudged Paul and said, 'Get up and look!' Upon waking, he said: 'You are my Lord Jesus Christ, the king [...] But why are you so sad and sorrowful, Lord? If you are troubled, [tell me clearly what it is], Lord, seeing you like this is very sad.'

"Paul, I am going to be crucified again."

"God forbid, Lord, that I should ever see that."

"Paul, go to Rome and exhort the believers to remain faithful to their heavenly calling."

[...] walking on the sea, the Lord went before them, pointing out the way like a star."

Saint Paul was beheaded for his faith in the resurrection of Christ. His willingness to face such a sudden death is the praxis of the beliefs that shape his letters, written to early Christians in times of Roman oppression; his hymn to love is essential to understanding his legacy:

[66] "As he went out through the gate, he saw the Lord coming into Rome. <And as soon> as he noticed him he said, "Lord, why are you here?"

'The Lord said to him, "I am going into Rome to be crucified".

Peter said to him, "Lord, are you to be crucified again?"

"He said to him, "Yes, Peter, | am to be crucified again".

When Peter came to himself and saw the Lord returning to heaven, he himself turned back to Rome, rejoicing and glorifying the Lord because he himself had said to him, "I am to be crucified"— "this was going to happen to Peter.

The Acts of Peter. (2012). Robert Stoops Jr. Ed., Salem, Or.: Polebridge Press.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV).

4. Saint Thomas, known for his initial disbelief in Jesus' resurrection, became a martyr while spreading Christianity in India.

His death, caused by a jealous guru who pierced him with a spear on a sacred mountain in Madras, highlights his faith in the resurrection.

5. Saint Lawrence was born in Huesca, Spain, in the late 3rd century, during the reign of Emperor Valerian. He was a deacon in the Church of Rome and served under Pope Sixtus II. Tradition tells that Lawrence was condemned to death by torture on a hot grill. During his martyrdom, Lawrence joked with his torturers, saying at one point:

"All right, I'm roasted on one side; turn me over and eat me."

This brave and humorous attitude has led Saint Lawrence to be considered the patron saint of comedians and cooks.

6. Saint Lucy: Witness of Faith in Ancient Rome, Christian martyr. In an exchange with Pascasius, a hostile persecutor subordinate to Emperor Diocletian, Lucy declares that those who live in piety and chastity are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Pascasius orders that Lucy be dragged to a brothel to be violated; defiant, Lucy warns him that he will suffer those pleasures for Christ, provoking the fury of her executioner. However, Lucy's body becomes immobile and unmovable, defying a dozen men trying to move her. Unable to defeat her this way, Pascasius opts for crueler methods. He pours boiling tar, resin, and oil on her and then surrounds her with a blazing pyre. Lucy emerges unharmed and sings Christ's praises amidst the flames.

Pascasius orders her eyes to be gouged out then, at the suggestion of Lucy's suitor, whom she refuses to marry. The next day, Lucy rises with even more beautiful eyes. Frustrated, Pascasius tries to kill her by thrusting a sword into her throat, but even that does not immediately end her life. Finally, a priest comes to administer communion, after which she departs the spirit.

Due to these episodes, Saint Lucy is often invoked for the healing of eye ailments, and artists depict her carrying her eyes in a dish or a cup. She is also used to protect against sore throats.

7. Saint Catherine of Siena: Theologian and Mystic of the 14th Century, born in 1347, her life was marked by mystical visions and a deep spiritual connection.

Saint Catherine was harassed by her parents, who wanted to marry her and did not allow her entry into the Dominican convent. When her father was dying, Catherine asked God to let her suffer all the bodily ills for the forgiveness of her father's sins. Immediately, Catherine was affected by bodily pains that would not leave her until her death; just then her father died.

Catherine played a crucial role in the Church, advising religious and political leaders of her time; some historians point out that the Middle Ages ended when Catherine convinced Pope Gregory XI to leave the seat of the pontifical chair in Avignon for Rome in 1376.

Pope Gregory XI, who was French, was reluctant to travel to Rome until Catherine reminded him that such had been his secret vote to God during the conclave that elected him. Surprised by that saint to whom God revealed his most secret thoughts, Gregory XI accepted to reestablish the Holy See in the Vatican.

Like Muhammad, Catherine learned to read and write by divine inspiration, without tutors. Thus, she composed a book of theology dictated by the Holy Spirit: "The Dialogue," a source of lucid theological arguments, such as:

> "Look how much ignorance and blindness there is in man, who, having a firm path, wants to walk on water. The true path is so pleasant to those who walk on it that any bitterness seems sweet to them, and any burden, light. In the darkness of the body, they find light, and, being mortal, they find immortal life, savoring, by the affection of love, with the light of faith, the eternal Truth, which promises refreshment to those who labor for me [Christ], who am grateful, compassionate, and just; who give each one what he deserves in justice: that all good is rewarded and all sin is punished[67]".

8. St. Thomas More, a politician, philosopher, and chancellor at the court of King Henry VIII of England, faced a crucial ethical dilemma when the monarch sought to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon to marry Anne Boleyn due to the lack of a male heir. A friend to both spouses, More refused to confirm the king's plot and instead praised Catherine as a "Virtuous Matron." This courageous stance led to his arrest and treason charges. Despite persuasion from friends and family, More remained steadfast. He was condemned to death and executed on July 6, 1535. His resistance and sacrifice endure as an example for those defending their ethical and religious convictions amid political and social pressure.

9. Saint Teresa of Ávila, also known as Teresa of Jesus, was born in 1515 in Ávila, Spain. She was a reformer nun of the Carmelite order and a prominent figure in Christian mysticism. Her experiences, expressed in her writings, made her a leading figure in Christian mysticism. She founded several convents, seeking a return to austerity and spiritual contemplation.

Among her notable works are "The Book of Life," an autobiography describing her spiritual life, and "The Interior Castle," which delves into the soul's union with God.

Contrary to puritanical morality, saints express their love for God through ecstasies of eternal surrender, as described by Saint Teresa of Jesus in her "Concepts of the Love of God."

> “But when this very rich Husband [Jesus, God, Holy Spirit] wants to enrich it [the soul] and give more, he converts it so much into Himself that like a person,

[67] Santa Catalina de Siena. (1996). Obras De Santa Catalina De Siena, *Diálogo, Oraciones Y Soliloquios*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos.

> who is fainted by the great pleasure and contentment, it seems to him that he remains suspended in those divine arms, and leaned against that sacred side and those divine breasts. She only knows how to enjoy it, sustained with that divine milk that her Husband is raising her, and improving to be able to give her away, and that she deserves more every day. When she wakes up from that dream, and from that heavenly intoxication, she remains as if frightened and dazed, and with a holy folly, it seems to me that she can say these words: Your breasts are better than wine[68].“

[68] De Ávila, Teresa (1915). *Obras de Santa Teresa de Jesús* (Vol. 4). El Monte Carmelo, 248 - 249.

The innocent pleasure of wine and the delights of breastfeeding come together in the union of the soul with its creator, as I also experienced during my brief and perennial stay in the afterlife:

> “Because when she was in that drunkenness, it seemed to her that there was nothing left to do but go up; But when she saw herself in a higher degree, and completely soaked (2) in that innumerable greatness of God, and she saw herself being so sustained, she delicately compared it, and thus said: Your breasts are better than wine. Because just as a child does not understand how it grows, nor does it know how to suckle, that even without suckling or doing anything, many times they pour milk into its mouth; So it is here, that the soul totally does not know about itself, nor does (3) anything, nor does it know how, 'or where, nor can it understand it, that such great good came to it. She knows that it is the greatest thing that can be enjoyed in life, even if all the delights and tastes of the world are combined together. She sees herself raised and improved, without knowing when she deserved it; she taught in great truths, without seeing the Master who teaches it; strengthened in the virtues, gifted by someone who knows it so well, and can do it so well. She doesn't know what to compare it to, if not the gift from her mother, who loves her son very much and raises him and gives him as a gift.”

10. Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan friar, illuminated the darkness of Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II. In a heroic act of Christian charity, he offered his life in place of a fellow prisoner, demonstrating that even in the most desperate circumstances, love can prevail over hatred.

11. Saint Óscar Romero, a Catholic archbishop in El Salvador, became a symbol of the struggle for human rights and social justice. Assassinated while celebrating mass on March 24, 1980, Romero faced violence due to his fierce opposition to political oppression and courageous defense of human rights. His legacy endures as a reminder of the Church's responsibility in promoting justice and peace.

The Limits of Holiness

In the existential nausea caused by crime, the absurdity of existence in a universe of atrocities like Auschwitz, Christianity offers pain and illness as a path to reconciliation and universal forgiveness in a utopian Kingdom of Heaven.

Saints and Martyrs are living testimony of this, since they understand, like Socrates, that most of the world's faults occur due to spiritual ignorance. Or, how can we blame homophobia on a child who was spoiled by his parents, ministers of a Temple, who prospered by preaching every Sunday that sodomy was a mortal sin?

If only someone had explained to that child that the sin of Sodom was not homosexuality but kidnapping and rape, and that much of the animosity of the Jews towards Jesus in his era was because he lived and slept with men and prostitutes! from town to town!

Likewise, how can we blame a sybarite who preaches that his promiscuity should not be censored but propagated as a way of life in all nursery schools?

If only someone had taught him, as Wittgenstein told Russell after the publication of his praise of marital infidelity[69], that it is one thing to be tolerable with a vice and another to try to make a virtue of that vice!

Vices and the Individual

Vices are pernicious because they imprison the Self in continuous repetition, leading to oppression and self-destruction, as we already explained in the chapter on our ability to perceive infinities.

The Being must go through a series of states that are finite due to the limits of our perception, but that are mathematically infinite, as Zeno demonstrates in the paradox of the arrow and in that of Achilles and the Tortoise.

Insisting on indulging in one of these infernal circles, whether lust, alcohol, drugs, lies, vanity or power, and so on, limits the possibilities of the Self.

It's not about craving new experiences but allowing them into our lives.

Those accepting the mortal vices of power, fame, and money fall into a metaphysical ignorance that leads to absolute evil. Those who decide to stay on such peaks of glory violate the most basic laws of human coexistence. Those who hear her voice and despise her to do evil, saying:

> “Hey! Who doesn't know that compassion, love and forgiveness is for fools? Let's take advantage of these beings as compassionate and faint-hearted as lambs! Let us ask them for favors to rob and murder them, and never share our positions!”

The pusillanimous sacrifice of the world's lambs in the face of criminals seems endless, yet their fragility has motivated many kings and politicians to murder those who dare to speak against murder, robbery, injustice, and abuse of power; against lying and plotting.

Is this a denial of life itself, as Nietzsche denounced? Or is it possible to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth, as announced by St. Malachy?

> "In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church, Peter the Roman will reign, who will shepherd his flock through many tribulations; when these are over, the city of the seven hills will be destroyed, and the fearsome judge will judge his people."

God, executioner of criminals

Despite naturalistic narratives trying to convince us that there is only despair in the world due to social injustices, there is a force that maintains balance day after day in humanity. It is enough to know that the number of inhabitants of the planet remains stable, with sufficient resources to survive, protected despite earthquakes, floods and wars.

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[69] Russell, B. (1929). *Marriage and Morals.* New York: Liveright.

This force, according to Catherine of Siena, demonstrates God's immanence in the world. The incredible thing, says the saint, is that there are wise men who deny it in their presumption to attribute the universe to chance.

The force balancing the Earth in the universe

Stephen Hawking made observations about humanity's fragility in relation to the cosmos and the potential risks of astronomical events. If scientists were to subject chance to statistical calculations, it would be demonstrated, through elaborate probability calculations, that there is no chance of us being alive tomorrow. An increase in the force of gravity in our galaxy due to a nearby shooting star would be enough to decompensate the Earth's orbit by five degrees, enough for temperatures to increase by two hundred degrees; In less than two minutes, all of humanity and almost all vertebrates will be extinct from the earth.

The journey of heavy bodies through the universe occurs in view of our telescopes around the world; But, oh, wonder! In our solar system, meteors, loose planets and celestial phenomena dissolve in a protective shield of millions of kilometers, made up of the planets that precede and precede us. In “Le bouclier planétaire: Jupiter, Saturne et le système solaire[70]”, astrophysicist Jean-Pierre Luminet explains the theory that Jupiter, Saturn and the asteroid belt act as protectors of the Earth against asteroids and comets.

The solar system formed from a cloud of gas and dust that collapsed under its own gravity. Jupiter, Saturn, and the other giant planets formed in the outer part of the solar system, where there was more gas and dust. Luminet explains how Jupiter, with its enormous gravity, can deflect asteroids and comets that get too close to the Sun. Saturn, with its asteroid ring, can trap asteroids and comets that get close to the inner solar system. The asteroid belt can also deflect asteroids and comets that approach Earth.

Luminet concludes that Jupiter, Saturn and the asteroid belt are a natural barrier that protects Earth from asteroids and comets. This barrier is essential for the survival of life on Earth. Another French book that addresses this theory is “La planète chanceuse”, by Jean-Pierre Petit[71]. In this book, Petit explains how Earth is a "lucky planet" because it is located in an area of the solar system where life is possible.

His theories would paradoxically refute Galileo and Voltaire; The earth is in the center of the universe, even if it rotates around the sun; A few degrees would be enough for the life we contemplate to be non-existent, and we are, as Leibnitz prescribed, in the best of all worlds.

The force balancing our functions

Not only does Earth occupy a privileged place among all planets and galaxies, but we also have a privileged destiny, dear reader, as survivors of so many days in a world plagued by social injustices, manipulations, intrigues and lies, not to mention natural hecatombs and diseases.

In my mystical texts I address the theme of divine protection of the righteous with good intentions, so I refer the reader to my book of poems “The Return of the Risen

[70] Luminet, J.-P. (2003). *Le bouclier planétaire : Jupiter, Saturne et le système solaire*. Odile Jacob.

[71] Petit, J.-P. (2003). *La planète chanceuse*. Fayard.

Jesus[72],” refraining from considering natural hecatombs, illnesses and death as misfortunes.

Suffice it to mention here that at 55 years old I have privileged health, without any ailment that afflicts me; I do no other exercise than taking my two pets for a walk three times a day

Despite all the injustices, there is a force that allows me, or such and this person, to get what is necessary to survive.

I once read a science fiction story from the United States in which the entire city of New York decided, against all custom, to go to the same park on a Saturday afternoon. The author thus expresses his wonder at the harmonious organization of the decisions we make in daily life. In effect, there is no reasonable law that explains why we all

[72] Santander Ferreira, H.N. (2023). *The Return of the Risen Jesus.* Stanley.

distribute our actions in a given society in various activities and not just one. Astrologers attribute the diversity of professions and characters in the world to the influence of the stars, but their thesis is rejected by science for being based on “coincidences” and not on a probative effect of cause and consequence. But even if astrology were accepted –for it has some ground, it would not explain the causes of this coincidence; If anything, it would lead us to deduce that there is a higher intelligence that organizes the stars so that they influence our personalities.

We are not individuals; we are humanity

In the section on Metaphysics, we described how we are not only protagonists but also observers in the world. Unfortunately, our wise men have chosen to define us by our actions, disregarding the capacity each human being has as an observer.

Those who observe or read live many lives, as demonstrated by playwrights, novelists, poets, and actors. Their talent does not come from an innate capacity that allows them to function with ease and confidence, but from their great sensitivity to observe their actions and those of those who perceive the phenomenological world in which they participate.

Hemingway compared the act of writing to goring a bull; Octavio Paz in “El Laberinto de la Soledad” accused Latin-Americans of “not splitting” (no rajarse), that is, of never letting their sentimental side be seen:

> “Popular language reflects the extent to which we defend ourselves from the outside; The ideal of “manliness” consists of never “splitting.” Those who “open up” are cowards. For us, contrary to what happens with other peoples, opening up is a weakness or a betrayal. The Mexican can bend, humiliate himself, “bend down,” but not “split,” that is, allow the outside world to penetrate his privacy. The “rajado” is unreliable, a traitor or a man of dubious fidelity, who tells secrets and is incapable of facing dangers as he should[73].”

It should be noted that the stereotype of the Latin American popular class contrasts with the delicate expression of the peninsular poets:

> STATUE
> … you will burn forever
> for your blind debauchery.
>
> DON JUAN
> So there is another life
> And another world than the one here?
> So is it true, woe is me!
> what I never believed?
> Fatal truth that chills me

[73] Paz, Octavio (1976*). El Laberinto de la Soledad.* Fondo de Cultura Económica, 26.

> the blood in the heart! [74]

Unlike Spain, Latin American poets have been stigmatized, like Baudelaire and Verlaine in France, for their private lives. All José Asunción Silva, Porfirio Barba Jacob and Gómez Jattín have tragically suffered persecution, ostracism or oblivion by a political caste that extends its nepotism to the world of letters. As Borges already denounced in the 1950s, literature in Latin America is a question not of talent but of complicity.

And it is because sensitivity is the bridge that allows us to leave the one-dimensional shell in which society tends to pigeonhole our personality. To let go or open up from intimacy is to allow us to connect with another life, renouncing the false image of uniqueness of character that society requires for its modus operandi. Having multifaceted and diverse citizens is contrary to marketing algorithms, religious gurus and party bosses.

Ortega y Gasset already denounced the modern tendency to specialize each human being in a single field of knowledge in his chapter “Barbarism and ‘Specialism’”, of his political treatise “The Rebellion of the Masses”:

> “Specialization begins precisely in a time that calls civilized man "encyclopedic" man. The 19th century began its destiny under the direction of creatures who lived encyclopedic lives, although their production already had a special character. In the subsequent generation, the equation has shifted, and the specialty begins to dislodge integral culture within each man of science. When in 1890 a third generation took the intellectual command of Europe, we found a type of scientist without an example in history. He is a man who, of everything there is to know to be a discreet character, knows only a certain science, and even of that science he only knows well the small portion in which he is an active researcher. He goes so far as to proclaim as a virtue not to learn about everything that is outside the narrow landscape that he specially cultivates, and he calls curiosity about the whole of knowledge "dilettantism[75]."

The one-dimensionality of character

Academic specialization, contrary to the ideal of the Renaissance man so criticized by postmodernity and yet celebrated by post-modernity in Leonardo, reinforces the social prejudice that we are one-dimensional beings of character, and that our actions must be faithful to one of the narratives that our society demands and imposes. Leonardo da Vinci

[74] Zorrilla, José (1844). *Don Juan Tenorio.* Biblioteca Virtual Universal, III, 2, 82 – 90.

[75] Ortega y Gasset, J. (1930). ““La especialización comienza precisamente en un tiempo que llama hombre civilizado al hombre "enciclopédico". El siglo XIX inicia sus destinos bajo la dirección de criaturas que viven enciclopédicamente, aunque su producción tenga ya un carácter de especialismo. En la generación subsiguiente, la ecuación se ha desplazado, y la especialidad empieza a desalojar dentro de cada hombre de ciencia a la cultura integral. Cuando en 1890 una tercera generación toma el mando intelectual de Europa, nos encontramos con un tipo de científico sin ejemplo en la historia. Es un hombre que, de todo lo que hay que saber para ser un personaje discreto, conoce sólo una ciencia determinada, y aun de esa ciencia sólo conoce bien la pequeña porción en que él es activo investigador. Llega a proclamar como una virtud el no enterarse de cuanto quede fuera del angosto paisaje que especialmente cultiva, y llama dilettantismo a la curiosidad por el conjunto del saber.” *La rebelión de las masas*. ePUByrm, 103.

is precisely presented as the exception to the rule; an artist who was also an architect, engineer, inventor, and, if we take note of Sergei Eisenstein's writings, a filmmaker.

I, Hugo Noël Santander Ferreira, for example, must present myself as the author of a metaphysics book from the beginning, and although in the prologue, I warned the reader that my reflection also covers forbidden areas, and that there is no phenomenon about which a human being should exclude form his reflection, I am aware that I break social norms when I mention that I am an actor, a filmmaker, and a theater director, a photographer, and a teacher of English, French, and Latin. These conventions are even more contradicted when I mention the persecutions that I have suffered from political forces concerned about my frankness and freedom of thought. Others presume that for a philosopher to write a treatise on philosophy, they must use a supposedly scientific and objective language, avoiding commenting on personal experiences. Poems and paintings must be excluded from this cold cogitation.

And yet I also write from my ablative judgments and poetic intuitions, without renouncing rigorous philosophical and scientific research, without adhering to the narrative that tradition has bequeathed to me: either one is bohemian and crazy, or one is wise and a flatterer of the powers of the world.

Refuting this narrative is not difficult; Plato, the father of philosophy according to Whitehead, never wrote in a cold or impartial manner, but through dramatic dialogues. Conversation, in fact, is more philosophical than academic monologue, as it admits contradictions, refutations, and reformulations. It is my homage to the great Athenian thinker that several sections and a chapter of this book are presented in dialogue.

Those who philosophize are, moreover, either due to the certainties we unveil, or due to the envy we provoke among our fellow citizens since Socrates, victims of attempts of murder, as Thomas de Quincey narrates in his essay "On Murder as One of the Fine Arts":

> "But there is another class of assassinations, which has prevailed from an early period of the seventeenth century, that really does surprise me; I mean the assassination of philosophers. For, gentlemen, it is a fact, that every philosopher of eminence for the two last centuries has either been murdered, or, at the least, been very near it; insomuch, that if a man calls himself a philosopher, and never had his life attempted, rest assured there is nothing in him[76]."

Aristotle brought historical prose to philosophy from Herodotus, who, despite being the subject of recent revisionisms, should not only be considered the father of history but also of impartiality.

But both Herodotus and Aristotle weave their academicism with personal anecdotes, such as the encounter of the former with Egyptian priests or Aristotle's references to his experience as a spectator of tragedies in his "Poetics." Even Kant confesses his plagiarism of Hume's work, and Hegel repeats on several occasions his admiration for the investigations of a clinical psychology now relegated to oblivion.

The biographical circumstances of an author are not, according to the 21st-century university academic narrative, the concern of the author-philosopher but of the

[7676] De Quincey, T. (1863). *Murder, as one of the fine arts, The English mail coach.* Banasthali. [digitallibraryindia; JaiGyan]. Digital Library of India.

biographers and commentators who, only in the event of the author's success, will shed light on the confidences and gossip of the author. For example, the already mentioned De Quincey, who described Kant's mental health deterioration as if the goddess of reason delighted in demonstrating the fragility of the man who sought to limit its possibilities.

Biographers' narratives focus their investigations in one direction. Thus, for example, they tell us that Jesus was the Messiah, Shakespeare a poet, and Hitler a demagogue; but reading their biographies, we learn that Jesus was also a magician, Shakespeare a respectable bourgeois, and Hitler a painter.

The truth that infuriates those who believe in categorizing human beings as if they were in a zoo is that each human being is born to experience life in all its human manifestations. As Montaigne prescribes in his essay "On the Inconstancy of Our Actions", quoting Lucretius:

"Don't we see that man always seeks something, without knowing what he wants, and that he constantly changes his place as if he could be freed from the burden that overwhelms him?[77]"

Even those who decide to act according to the precepts and impositions of their societies find that life's dynamics itself is contrary to unicaracterization. Montaigne recounts several humorous anecdotes in that essay, such as that of the virginal maiden who threw herself out of a window, fearing that a young man would seduce her, only to survive the blow and dedicate herself to the oldest profession in the world a few years later. Contrary to those who believe that variability or inconstancy is a feminine weakness, Montaigne cites the example of a Pope and an Emperor:

"Those who engage in the examination of human actions are never so embarrassed as when they try to harmonize and present under the same tone the acts of men, which commonly contradict themselves in such a strange way that it seems impossible for them to belong to the same harvester. Young Marius showed himself at times a son of Mars, and a son of Venus at others. Pope Boniface VIII is said to have entered into the exercise of his office like a fox, to have behaved like a lion, and to have died like a dog. And who would ever have believed of Nero, the true image of cruelty, that when presented with a death sentence to sign, he would respond: 'Would to God that I had never learned to write!' Such pain was caused to him by the condemnation of a man. Similar examples are extremely abundant; each one can find them in themselves, and I find it strange to see that people of understanding insist on harmonizing such contradictory acts, considering that irresolution seems to me the most common and visible vice of our nature, as evidenced by this famous verse of Publius, the comic poet:

Bad advice is that which cannot be changed[78]."

As Josef Knecht, the character of Hermann Hesse, perceived in "Das Glasperlenspiel" ("The Glass Bead Game"):

We are denied to be

[77] *Lucrecio, "Nonne videmus,*
quid sibi quisque velit, nescire, et quaerere semper,
commutare locum, quasi onus deponere possit?" III, 1070.

[78] "CEUX qui s'exerçent à contreroller les actions hu-maines, ne se trouvent en aucune partie si em-peschez, qu'à les r'appiesser & mettre à mesme lustre: car elles se contredisent communément de si estrange façon, qu'il semble imposible qu'elles soient parties de mesme boutique. Le jeune Marius se trouve tantost fils de Mars, tantost fils de Venus. Le Pape Bo-niface huictiesme, entra, dit-on, en sa charge comme un renard, s'y porta comme un lion, & mourut comme un chien. Et qui croiroit que ce fust de Neron, cette vraie image de la cruauté, comme on luy presentast à signer, suyvant le stile, la sentence d'un criminel condamné, qui eust respondu: "Pleust à Dieu que je n'eusse jamais sceu escrire, tant le coeur luy serroit de condamner un homme à mort." Tout est si plein de tels exem-ples, voire chacun en peut tant fournir à soy-mesme, que je trouve estrange, de voir quelquefois des gens d'entendement, se mettre en peine d'assortir ces pieces: veu que l'irresolution me semble le plus commun & apparent vice de nostre natu-re, tesmoing ce fameux verset de Publius le farseur, *Malum consilium est, quod mutari non potest*."

Or we are just like any other
Docile we flow in all states[79]

Certainly, a certainty that the Roman poet Horace had already sung in the Rome of August:

"We let ourselves be guided like a log,
moved by the nerves of others."

The semiotics of theater has investigated the manifestations of the characters that an actor embodies; their catalog or inventory of representations of human beings demonstrates that our perception of others remains superficial and inaccurate.

Types are recognized by stereotyped characteristics representing a particular group of people. For example, the strict police officer, the compassionate doctor, or the overprotective mother could be considered types.

Stereotypes are simplified and fixed representations of a type of character that frequently repeat in culture, such as the evil villain, the damsel in distress, or the brave hero.

Roles are characters that play specific functions in the plot and may be linked to stereotypes or types, but they do not have the same depth as characters. They can be the comedian, the antagonist, the protagonist, etc.

Characters often have greater psychological, emotional, and motivational depth. Their complexity allows them to evolve throughout the story.

Individuals are unique beings, the most proper manifestation of the human being, those characters with whom we can fully identify. An example could be Hamlet from Shakespeare, a character full of nuances and internal conflicts, or Julian Sorel, the protagonist of Stendhal's "The Red and the Black."

The biographies of famous actors have shown the world, as Cervantes had already done with the novel, and Shakespeare or Chekhov with theater, that living is a sum of often contradictory feelings, works, and professions. It is Don Quixote who moves us with his madness and endears us with his sanity before his death, and it is Hamlet who preaches that they cannot tear the heart of his mystery.

The truth sets us free

One day, I had the vision that I would be attacked by murderers. I went out semi-naked into the streets and gave my jewels to the thieves that abound in Bucaramanga; then, I prepared to join the long list of martyrs of truth. Two young men approached me, one of them wielding a weapon. Pretending to aim at his friend, he turned his revolver towards me and fired three times from about ten meters away. I was not injured, and both young men fled in terror.

[79] Hesse, Herman (1988). Uns ist versagt, zu sein
Oder nur, wir sind die Ströme
Gleiten läßlich durch alles Sein.
Das Glasperlenspiel: Versuch einer Lebensbeschreibung des Magister Ludi Josef Knecht samt Knechts hinterlassenen Schrifte. Suhrkamp, 472.

I mention it, because we must not flee but face destiny, because I believe, as Hamlet sings when facing the snares of his enemies:

We should not run away but face destiny, for I believe, as Hamlet sings when facing the traps of his enemies:

HAMLET
We defy augury.
There's a special providence
in the fall of a sparrow.
If it be now, 'tis not to come;
if it be not to come, it will be now;
if it be not now, yet it will come.
The readiness is all.
Since no man, of aught he leaves,
knows what is't to leave betimes, let be.

The truth that sets us free is that all crimes, all injustices, all oppressions, from the slavery of Egypt to the Nazi Holocaust, from the cannibalism of the Aztecs to the Encomienda of the Spaniards, the extermination of the Yarigui people, and the sexual trafficking of minors by Colombian guerrillas, all are justified by an illusion, our unjustified and perishable fear of pain, a fear we call suffering.

Suffering is an illusion

Pain is the awareness of our life, and there is no day without pain, just as there is no day without tranquility, as sung by Saint Thomas Becket in Thomas Eastern Eliot's Sacramental Play "Death in the Cathedral":

They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.
They know and do not know, that acting is suffering
And suffering is action. Neither does the actor suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still[80].

Similarly, we can affirm that laughter is the analgesic of our life, and there is no day without us being able to laugh at our triumphs or failures, envies or intrigues. The faces of the tragic and the comic in the theater are, indeed, masks that we can wear according to the disposition of our minds.

[80] Eliot, T. S. (1935). *Murder in the Cathedral*. IIIT Publications. [Digital Library India, JaiGyan Collection].

That is why gurus and saints prescribe that suffering or joy does not exist in the real or phenomenological world but in our minds. For example, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, also known as Osho, a spiritual leader and master of Indian philosophy who founded a spiritual movement and meditation center in India, emphasized consciousness and self-awareness as means to overcome suffering and achieve spiritual enlightenment. His teachings included ideas about meditation, personal growth, and the connection between the body, mind, and spirit: "Pain is not to make you suffer. Pain is to make you more conscious. And when you are conscious, misery disappears."

No evil lasts a hundred years nor a body withstands it

Karl Jaspers, a German existentialist philosopher and psychiatrist, explored in his philosophy the human condition, existence, and limit experiences such as suffering. Jaspers considered suffering an inevitable part of human existence and, in a sense, fundamental for personal growth and the search for meaning in life.

For Jaspers, moments of suffering could be crucial for self-discovery and understanding of being. He argued that these limit moments lead us to question our beliefs, values, and perceptions, inviting us to explore deeper dimensions of our existence.

According to Jaspers, it is in those moments of suffering where new paths toward self-reflection and self-discovery can open up. Although suffering is necessarily painful and difficult to face, it also offers opportunities for spiritual growth and the development of awareness of oneself and the world around us.

That suffering is an illusion is a theme extensively addressed and demonstrated not only by Christian saints but also by mystics from around the world. Let's remember some of them and their teachings:

1. **Buddha** was a prince who abandoned his wealth to seek the truth. He taught: "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." He also taught about the connection between our thoughts and our reality: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts and is made up of our thoughts."

2. Rumi, whose full name is Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, was an influential Persian poet, mystic, and scholar of the 13th century. Born on September 30, 1207, in Balkh (currently in Afghanistan) into a family of religious scholars, Rumi is known for his extensive poetic work and profound spiritual wisdom that has transcended borders and remains relevant today: "The wound is the place where the light enters" and "Darkness is the greatest light. Any fear is the door."

3. Khalil Gibran: Lebanese-American author, known for his work "The Prophet." Born in 1883 and died in 1931. His literature explored themes of spirituality, love, and humanity. Gibran focused his writings on the search for the meaning of life and the depth of the human soul. "Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding."

4. Emily Dickinson: American poet born in 1830 and died in 1886. Her poetic work explored themes such as nature, death, and spiritual seeking. Dickinson, known for her unique style and reclusion, reflected on hope and truth, expressing: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul." and "Truth must dazzle gradually or every man be blind."

5. Walt Whitman: American poet born in 1819 and died in 1892. He is known for his work "Leaves of Grass." He celebrated human unity and connection with others. "I celebrate myself, and sing myself, And what I assume you shall assume, For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." are expressions reflecting his view on human interconnection and the celebration of individuality in collectivity.

6. Saint Augustine: Christian saint and theologian, lived between 354 and 430. He highlighted the relationship between human suffering and encountering God, expressing: "Human suffering leads us to God; without suffering, man would be proud and forget God."

7. Saint Anselm: Medieval theologian and philosopher, lived between 1033 and 1109. He noted that suffering is a path to truth and closeness to God: "Suffering is the way to knowledge of truth. Through suffering, we approach God and our true nature."

8. Saint Thomas Aquinas: Theologian and philosopher of the 13th century, taught about virtue and holiness through suffering: "Suffering can be a means to attain virtue and holiness. Through suffering, we develop patience, strength, and humility."

9. María de Ágreda: Spanish mystic and writer of the 17th century, emphasized the purifying aspect of suffering: "Suffering is a form of soul purification. Through suffering, we detach from the earthly and draw near to God."

10. Teresa of Avila: Spanish saint and mystic of the 16th century, highlighted the union with Christ through suffering: "Suffering brings us closer to Christ. Through suffering, we can share in his Passion and redemption."

11. Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Society of Jesus, lived between 1491 and 1556. He considered suffering as a path to understanding God's will: "Suffering can be a way to find God. Through suffering, we learn to trust in God's will and accept his plan for us."

12. John Bosco: Italian saint of the 19th century, emphasized the importance of suffering in spiritual growth: "Suffering can be an opportunity to grow in faith. Through suffering, we develop perseverance and trust in God." All priests and criminals who attempted to destroy him died all of a sudden.

13. Catherine of Siena: Italian saint and mystic of the 14th century, connected suffering with the union with the crucified Christ: "Suffering is a way of union with the crucified Christ. Through suffering, we can experience the compassion and love of Christ for humanity."

Atheists, believers, heretics, and demons, condemned and repentant, we all desire happiness, which atheists call evolution and Christians call God. In the search for the goddess of happiness, it is enough to convert even pain to her religion to eliminate all apprehensions, anxieties, and fears of the world.

Why are there criminals in humanity? Because they believe they are unhappy.

I'm not referring to the solitary criminal portrayed over and over again in the Manichean series of detectives and vigilantes by the media, but to the criminals who carry out their work with full impunity, supported by a community that is actually complicit in their crimes.

They are the sons of Cain, who in the Bible make up the majority of humanity, those who always find a justification for murder and theft. They are the martyrs of evil.

Judas, Nero, Hitler, Stalin and Fidel, martyrs of evil

In his story "The Three Versions of Judas", from "Ficciones", Jorge Luis Borges proposes the thesis that Judas is the true messiah who sacrifices himself for humanity, because, unlike Jesus, he must commit an unforgivable act, which ensures the damnation of his soul in hell for all eternity. In his attempt at originality, Borges pays attention to betrayal, which is, according to Dante, the worst crime, so he orders that both Judas and Marcus Brutus be frozen in the last infernal circle.

That said, Borges reveals an important point: Judas was able to do what no other enemy of Jesus Christ dared to do in his time: betray him. Let us imagine today a man who walks on water, stops storms, multiplies fish and loaves, heals the sick and raises

the dead. What envy and comments would he not arouse in our time? We have already addressed the problem of envy, which is that human desire for all those who cohabit and share this planet to be on the same level as the envious person, no matter how miserable it may be.

The martyr of evil is the one who chooses to take the lead in the most deplorable feelings of a community against a noble and exalted being. Judas did it against Jesus Christ; Nero against Saint Peter and Saint Paul; Hitler against the Jews; Stalin against Trotsky; Fidel against the peaceful intellectuals of Latin America. We can also include the great demagogues of the plebs and the leaders of the aristocracy, who endorse the hatred of social groups against others.

Throughout my life in 11 universities in 9 cities in 7 countries on 5 continents, I have also confronted these characters in environments that I considered calm as a student, as a teacher and as a writer. My work and my relationships are going in apparent harmony, when suddenly I am confronted by a man or woman who complains to me about facts and opinions that I consider absurd, but that he presents to me as irrefutable arguments.

As a student I was participating in my classes at the Javeriana University, citing the authors I have read, with the same frequency that I quote them in these pages, when suddenly I found myself alone with A... in an isolated classroom on a mountain. "What right do you have to cite so many authors?" he asks me. "Don't you understand that with your knowledge you humiliate us?..." were his main arguments. I really didn't pay attention to his almost one hour-long tirade. Only now, with the passage of four decades, do I realize that A... listed the arguments that were delivered to the directors of the Javeriana University. The effect of that insidiousness was that the University had not helped me find a stable job in Bogotá after my degree; On the contrary, the directives relegated me to doing internships organizing a warehouse of video cassettes. If it weren't for my resilience, I would have ended up as one of the many brilliant minds who are driven to alcohol and drugs by being systematically humiliated by a society that fears their talent.

This scenario has been repeated in every city I visit, in the majority of contexts in which I present my work. The most recent was that of M…, an intellectual who calls himself a writer without having published a single book in his life, apart from articles in an online newspaper. Taking the voice of the Colombian left, M… announced before a Wsup group of some 700 Latin American intellectuals, that soon I would no longer have a way to live, since my monthly salary in the Governorate of Santander had been taken from me. I had already inferred, needless to write, that the end of said contract had been the product of the intrigues of the Petrista left, which has never forgiven me for the fact that I am not a fan of either the left or what they disparagingly call the right; My criticism of what is today considered the worst president in the history of Colombia had to be paid with blood, and M.. wanted to announce his victory in the face of my imminent decline.

M… accused me of not having invited several writers to a public activity at FILBO22, but several writers stated that I had done so. Without listening to the public refutation with which M.. humiliated himself, he withdrew, alleging that I was the one who had begun to provoke him. I tried to easy the waters with a poem of reconciliation that he spurned.

Both A… and M… are martyrs of evil, and their suffering has been greater by seeing me continue my life without any alteration. It is worth mentioning that M… died a few years after facing me, a victim of cancer.

The martyrs of evil exist, but those of us who survive their attacks, whether Paulo, whom Nero saw resurrected, the Jew saved by Schindler or Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, the Soviet poet who survived the Goulash and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 , be it the Cuban family that fled from Fidel and today prospers in Miami, we live in the certainty of the postulates of this book.

What unites those of us who survive the attacks of those who represent absolute betrayal is that we do not doubt that, as long as we remain faithful to our ideals, of honesty and truth, we will lack nothing in life, and if it happened we would not be afraid to abandon the world.

As I have already testified several times, my studies have led me to the certainty that everything that the sacred books preach under the aegis of justice and divine love is true. It is not necessary to quote a poem to those who endured the attacks of evil and survived.

It is enough to live as a testimony of Psalm 91:

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

(KJV)

The Murder of Silencing the Other

We live in a society that condemns murder and yet constantly allows it through phrases like "I'd rather change the subject," "I don't want to talk about it," "we don't discuss politics or religion here," "if you keep talking about that, I'm leaving."

Advocates of this cautious way of murdering the other argue that silence prevents greater evils, such as arguments and fights, but all they achieve is to replace truth with the hypocrisy of false friendship or love.

This murder functions, albeit limitedly, in politics and business, where parties sit down to "negotiate" their administrative or economic interests, but extending such castration to the realms of family, friendship, and academia is to murder the sincere family member, the loyal friend, the lover of truth. Such was the fate of Cordelia, the honest and sincere daughter of King Lear, whom the senile monarch condemned to a wretched fate in exile simply because she was unable to flatter him like his hypocritical sisters did to strip him of his possessions. Too late he's able to recognize his error before the doors of death:

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by the moon.

By silencing the other, the ideology of lies, crime, and deception is defended.

Silencing the other is often replaced by a string of excuses from the murderers, which prompts the silenced to raise their voices in protest, an opportunity that the silence killers often seize to victimize themselves and argue that they are being shouted at and disrespected.

I cite some very common scenarios in Colombian bourgeois society:

1. The mother who silences her artist son by telling him that she wants nothing to do with such an unprofitable profession.
2. The friend who silences his friend because he asks where the money came from to buy an apartment in the city's most exclusive neighborhood.
3. The son who silences his mother because she tells him it is not right to change wives for the fifth time.

4. The father who silences his teenage son when he asks why he is being forced to sign documents to incriminate innocents.

Silence thus prevails over crimes that society covertly accepts:

1. The greed of a mother.
2. The corruption of a friend.
3. The intolerance of a son.
4. The intrigues of a father.

It has been said that the only solution to conflicts is dialogue, but it should be added that such dialogue must be free, uncensored, without silences, without impositions.

Such dialogue must be calm, intelligent, open, with the ability to denounce the use of fallacies and false syllogisms.

Suppose the abuse of children is being discussed and a family father argues that such abuse is sanctioned in the Bible by passages like Proverbs 13:24 (NIV):

"Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them."

A Catholic would cite to refute not only the advances of psychology but also Jesus himself, who prescribed that these precepts were formulated by the hardness of their hearts and that the only valid commandment is "love your neighbor as yourself." A logician would also denounce the fallacy of authority.

"Not to silence the other" should be a commandment carved in stone in all schools and universities worldwide, accompanied, if anything, by the useful precept of "not repeating what has already been said".

Proof